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# Western Story Magazine

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# Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. XLVIII DECEMBER 27, 1924 No. 5

# Trouble Range

By

**Charles Wesley Sanders**

*Author of "The Bullet," "Riding Into Danger," etc.*

## CHAPTER I.

### HOME TO STAY.

TEN feet from the bunk house the young man astride the sorrel mare reined in his animal and sat considering the men who lounged along the front of the building. His glance went from face to face as if he sought one which he might recognize, but his scrutiny brought no light of recognition to his eyes. Even this encountering of half a dozen total strangers on his father's ranch caused no look of stupidity to dull his bronzed face, however. His surprise vanished quickly and left the reflection of a smile in its place, though his lips did not curve.

"Hello, boys," he said. "Where's Mr. Clifford?"

"In the house, I reckon," a man answered.

Bob Clifford favored him with a quick look, but he showed no resentment because of the sullenness of the answer. That light was still in his face and in his eyes.

"Who's handlin' the horses?" he asked.

"I am," a man answered.

"Will you turn my horse in for me?" Bob asked. "I've got a sore hand, you can see."

He slid down from the saddle, hold-

ing his bandaged right hand away from him. The man slouched over to the horse, removed the saddle, and led the animal toward a gate.

"Put him in the other corral," Bob called. "I see you've got the colts in there. Molly don't like colts."

The man turned an ugly face to him, but he led the horse up to another gate, opened it, slipped off the bridle, and sent the horse inside.

"Much obliged," Bob said cheerfully. "Do as much for you sometime."

The man said nothing. He walked back to the bunk house and leaned up against it.

Bob felt the eyes of the cowboys on him as he started for the house. He had a notion that there was a malevolent glare in the eyes of the man who had served him. Malevolence would come easily to that fellow, Bob suspected. He had a mean face, and his little eyes were crossed. He was not the kind of man one usually found on old Jake Clifford's ranch. Old Jake Clifford was a judge of men and of horses. He could judge the qualities of either quickly and surely, Bob knew. The son had often seen him do it, and he had rarely known him to make a mistake.

"I reckon things are about as bad as they could be," Bob told himself as he entered the kitchen of the ranch house.

There was no one in the kitchen. Supper time was past. Bob had finished his long day's ride with the westering sun at his back.

He crossed the kitchen and opened a door leading into a large square room. His eyes were glowing now, and a smile wreathed his lips. The light in the eyes and the smile on the lips gave his face a pleasant expression.

At the table was seated a man of perhaps sixty. His face was lined and seamed and his thin hair was gray, but the eyes which he lifted to his son's face were exactly like Bob's eyes except that they were not so young. They were sunken in a network of wrinkles, but they were clear and steady and into them now leaped an answering light.

Neither of the men spoke, though they had not met for a year and a half. Bob advanced to his father and put out his left hand. The father took it in both his own, and young eyes clung to old for a space.

"Dropped in to see me, have you, Bob?" the old man asked. "'Bout time, ain't it?"

There was no reproach in his tone. It only rang with the gladness of welcome.

"I've come home to stay," Bob said.

Clifford had been cleaning a revolver. On the table beside him were two others, newly cleaned and loaded. As Bob made his statement the old man's eyes dropped to the gun in his hand. Bob's smile flitted briefly across his lips. He could imagine the light which had leaped into his father's eyes.

"Quit the rangers, have you, Bob?"

"Left 'em flat on their backs," Bob answered. "Thought it was about time I did the prodigal son act. Got a fatted calf killed, dad?"

"Nope, but the pantry's full of food. Help yourself."

Bob went into the kitchen and helped himself abundantly. He ate hungrily, but he did not act as if his mind were on the food. The smile had been erased from his lips, and his eyes were stern. This was his home—the home of his boyhood and his youth. He loved it—the house, the outbuildings, the corrals, the far-flung, rolling acres of range. He loved the white-faced cattle, the horses, even the two old, gentle cows which his father kept. Often in his absence his mind had pictured the range, the mountains, the deep cañons, the six hundred and forty acres of wheat land, golden now, almost ready for the harvest. The irrigated bottom lands where the sweet alfalfa grew had often

been in his recollection; the scent of alfalfa freshly cut had come to him. He had heard the whir of mower and the drone of the big "combine" as it cut and threshed the wheat. He had been lonely for all of it—and now he had come back.

And something was wrong, something was seriously wrong. For years his father had been successful. In very few seasons had he operated at a loss. Beginning with a thousand acres of range, he now owned ten thousand, and to this was added the irrigated land and the big, rolling wheat fields. Clifford had been a rich man and a successful one, and he had accepted riches and success coolly, without any access of pride.

But somehow now Bob had a feeling as if desolation had settled over the place. Those strange, sullen men out there had contributed to that. Clifford had always paid good wages and had treated his men as equals. They had responded, and there had been little trouble on the ranch. Some of those big-hearted, cheerful boys had been supplanted by this crew. Where had the boys gone?

A hundred questions surged into Bob's brain, but he did not formulate them so that he could put them to his father. His father was queer in that way. He didn't like being questioned. Always if he had had anything to communicate to his son he had communicated it.

And those guns on the table and the one in the old man's hand. What did they mean? Usually they reposed in a bureau drawer upstairs. Bob had not seen his father get them out in a long time. Of course he might just have been cleaning them to pass away the time till he went to bed. And yet Bob didn't believe that. There had been something in the way the old man had handled the guns—something definite.

Bob pushed back from the table, rolled and lighted a cigarette, and returned to the other room. His father was still working at the gun, and he did not lift his eyes.

"How come you've quit the rangers, Bob, and what's the matter with your hand?" he asked.

"Wanted to come home," Bob answered. "Got tired roaming in a saddle, leadin' a pack horse. As for my hand—well, I had a little run-in with a fella day before yesterday. Just a little run-in, you know.

"It was my last day in the service. One of the club boys sent word to me that a guy had killed an elk over in the mountains. 'Gainst the law to kill an elk any time, you know, and so I hustled over there. I didn't find any dead elk, and for a while I didn't find anything. I had dismounted and was looking around when, all of a sudden, there was a shot. I figured afterward that somebody had pulled his gun and throwed a bullet at me. Just at the second the shot was fired I had begun to kneel to look at a track in the earth. I don't think this fella aimed. He just pulled his gun and throwed his bullet. My movement changed my position and the bullet creased the back of my hand. I had gone back on my haunches, you see, and my hand was about where my middle would have been."

"He was tryin' to throw a bullet into your stomach, eh?"

"Looked like it. I drew, of course, and pumped a bullet at the place where the shot had come from, but I didn't get him. He was gone when I went huntin' for him."

Clifford might have been expected to ask what trace of the man there had been, but he did not. He merely kept his eyes on his gun, nodding. For a space there was silence between the two men. Then the father put the gun on the table.

"Lemme have a look at that hand," he said.

"I thought I'd ride over and let Doc

MacLaren have a look at it," Bob said, but he began to unwind the bandage.

There was a red crease across the back of the hand and the hand was inflamed and swollen. Clifford looked at it like a man who has gazed on many a wound.

"Yes," he said, "you better get right over to MacLaren's. Looks to me like you might have an infection there. There's a little pus up at this end right now. You didn't take care of it, did you?"

"I washed it good and bound it up. Well, I'll be ridin' over there."

Clifford looked at the clock, and while his eyes were averted, he said:

"I cleaned up your guns last night. They're up in your room. I don't expect you will want them to-night, but I thought I'd see that they was in shape for you if you happened along home."

"I guess I'll get 'em and see what they look like," Bob said carelessly.

He crossed a room, opened a door, and mounted the stairs. He found the guns in a bureau drawer, and his belt in a closet. He buckled on the belt and put the guns into the holsters. Then he buttoned up his coat and returned below stairs.

"You'll want a fresh horse, won't you?" his father asked.

"The mare ought to rest," Bob answered. "She's carried me forty miles through the mountains to-day."

"You can have my horse," his father said.

They went out into the yard. The sun had set while they had talked, and the twilight was gone. The moon had not yet risen. The buildings lay in darkness.

Bob looked toward the bunk house. The butts of cigarettes glowed there, first one and then another along the line of sitting men.

"Who's the cross-eyed gent?" Bob asked.

"He showed up here yesterday. 'Screw-eye' Frick they call him. I'd heard of him as a horse breaker. He said he understood I had some young horses and offered to take on the job of breaking them. I had nobody else, and I hired him. He seems to know horses all right, and he has got the reputation."

Bob made no comment on the man and his sullenness. They walked over to the corral gate and a big roan came up to it in answer to Clifford's whistle. Clifford opened the gate and the horse pranced through.

Clifford put saddle and bridle on him and the men in front of the bunk house did not stir. Bob went out to the road and stopped there till he saw his father reënter the house. Then he pounded down the road toward MacLaren's.

## CHAPTER II.

### "SMOOTH AS THAT."

AS he turned in at MacLaren's place, he could look through a window into a front room. He saw two men in the room. One of them he recognized as the doctor; the other he did not know. Reining in his horse, he sat gazing at the two men for a moment. He judged that the second man was a patient. He was rather surprised at that, for MacLaren had long ago given up the practice of medicine. He had been running this ranch for a dozen years. He had made money from his practice in town for more than a quarter of a century and in other ways. He would, Bob knew, give medical attention to his friends, but he always turned strangers away and told them to get the doctor in town. However, Bob was confirmed in his notion that this man was a patient because presently the doctor rose and walked to a cabinet on the wall and took out a small bottle. He handed this to the man, who took it.

Bob dropped from his horse and trailed the reins. He took a step toward a side door as if he meant to knock

there, but then changed his mind and went to the front door. The doctor opened it to him after a moment. The doctor's greeting was cordial, and he bade Bob come right in. Bob followed him into the room where the man sat.

A keen edge had been given to Bob's curiosity by what he had seen at home, and he sent his eyes to the doctor's visitor as soon as he entered the room. The man was a fine specimen physically. He was tall and lean and his face was heavily tanned. For one thing Bob knew that he was a horseman, and that was not only because the man was dressed for riding, for there was that indefinable something about him which suggested that he was used to forking a horse.

The man's interest in Bob seemed to be no less than Bob's in him. His quick brown eyes caught Bob's, and his glance did not waver. Bob knew that he was taking a swift and sure inventory of him.

"Met Mr. Wingate, Bob?" MacLaren asked.

"No," Bob answered. "Just got home a while ago."

The doctor spoke his name, and Wingate rose from his seat and extended his hand. Bob had to take the hand with his own left hand. As Wingate gripped it, he looked at the wounded member.

"Had a little accident?" he asked.

Bob Clifford leaped to likes and dislikes instinctively. He never had to study a man for long to make up his mind about him. Now, as his hand met Wingate's, he conceived a sudden prejudice against him. His handclasp was firm enough, his eyes were steady enough, but there was something about him which stirred Bob's distaste. He had a feeling that Wingate thought too well of himself.

"Bullet creased the back of my hand," Bob answered. "My father thought I might get an infection. I want to show it to Doctor MacLaren."

"Ranger, ain't you? I'd heard so. I've met your father."

"Was a ranger," Bob replied. "Out of the service now."

"Well, ride over and see me some time," Wingate said, taking up his big gray hat. "I live over beyond you, you know."

"I didn't know," Bob said dryly. "I hadn't heard there had been any changes since I went away."

"Your father didn't speak of me?"

Wingate's voice was low, courteous. There was nothing in it from which Bob might gather offense, and yet it was somehow offensive to him. He had an impression that Wingate was acting a part, trying to put himself forward as a gentleman.

"My father is a poor hand to talk," Bob said.

He could not keep a certain asperity from his tone. He had always been that way; if he did not like a man, even if there were no apparent grounds for the dislike, he could not pretend. When he was in the presence of a man who stirred him in this way, he had a feeling of impatience; he wanted to get away from the man or have the man get away from him.

But Wingate seemed not to notice his snappy retort. He nodded and turned to the doctor.

"I'll be seeing you again, doctor," he said. And to Bob: "Well, ride over and see me."

And then he was gone. Bob stood looking at the door through which he had passed before he turned about to MacLaren. MacLaren was looking at him gravely.

"Who's he?" Bob asked.

"He came in here more than a year ago, a little while after you left," MacLaren answered. "He bought around eight thousand acres of grazing land and leased some more. He has some

good cattle. Bought a couple of bulls from me."

"Got coin, has he?"

"I think he's enormously rich," MacLaren answered. "He paid cash for his land and there was no question of price when he made his purchases from me. He's planning to go into the business on a big scale."

"Real cattleman, is he?"

"No question about that. He knows cattle. I gave him his choice of several animals, and he picked the best. He's a definite and certain fellow, Bob."

Bob had a notion that the good doctor shared his dislike of Wingate, but he did not ask him that. He and Wingate would meet again. Perhaps Wingate was all right. If he were not, Bob would find it out.

"Let's have a look at the hand," MacLaren said.

Bob removed the bandage and MacLaren examined the wound. He was of the opinion that Bob would have no trouble with it. He burned out the little infected spot and bandaged it again.

"It'll heal fast," he said. "Infections like that don't make much headway against blood like yours. So you're home to stay, are you?"

"Home to stay," Bob answered.

This doctor had ushered Bob into the world and had taken care of him medically since that time, though he had made little out of the latter, for Bob's sicknesses had been few. Bob had always liked him; he was a square shooter in every way; but Bob hesitated now to put any questions to him. A man was held to have plenty to do when he minded his own business. Yet the situation was extraordinary. There was a good deal going on, and Bob didn't like to be kept in the dark.

He looked at the doctor and found the latter regarding him with that grave look still in his eyes. Bob had a notion then that perhaps MacLaren wanted to be asked a few questions. He looked now like a man who had been going about with a good deal in his own head.

"This guy Wingate," Bob said then, "where'd he come from?"

"Oklahoma, he says," the doctor answered. "I understand he had a ranch there and later struck oil in the Eastern part of the country. I—you know I'm a director in the bank, Bob."

"And bank directors have to be careful," Bob supplied. "Well, you know me, doctor. Things aren't just right out at our place."

"That's it," MacLaren said quickly. "But don't you whisper a word to your father when you go home. Tell him I fixed up your hand and let it go at that. Well, when this Wingate came to town he had half a million dollars in cash in a satchel. We hesitated about taking so large a deposit. We're not a big bank, you know. But Wingate said he was going to check out a good deal of it right away. Was going to buy land and cattle. So we took his money. He bought a good horse and he made a whirlwind trip through the country clear up into the mountains. In less than a week he had his land and some cattle. And he's looking around for more land."

"Money don't mean much in his young life, eh?"

"It does that. He drove some sharp bargains. George Speed has been wanting to sell for a long time, and he got George's five thousand acres for a little more than half what it was worth. George fell for the all-cash proposition that Wingate made him."

"Wingate is plannin' to become one of these here barons, is he?" Bob asked. "He's a little too smooth, isn't he? Made his money in oil, huh? He's as smooth as that, isn't he?"

"As smooth as that," the doctor agreed.

"He was here as a patient, wasn't he?" Bob asked. "I know you never talk about your patients, but I don't like

this guy, doctor, and I don't know why I don't like him."

"He comes to see me about every three days," MacLaren said. "He claims he has something the matter with his stomach. Says it feels as if he were carrying a chunk of lead in it. Can't sleep, either."

"He looks healthy enough."

MacLaren played with a pencil on the table before him. His eyes were screwed up. Suddenly he lifted his head and looked at Bob.

"There's nothing the matter with the man," he said harshly. "I've been giving him a little harmless medicine because he insisted he was sick. He keeps coming here."

"Always at night?"

"Daytimes mostly. He has been here twice when I was in town."

Bob's face hardened, and his lips tightened. Many men, in the past, had ridden to MacLaren's ranch, and they had not ridden there to obtain MacLaren's professional services. Before Bob's eyes rose the picture of a girl, a red-cheeked girl with hair as black as night and eyes of deepest blue, that rare and beautiful combination. She was an upstanding girl, fearless, flashing, not susceptible to flattery, a hard-riding, dashing girl, a fine product of the country.

She and Bob had grown up together. They had been boy-and-girl pals. Manhood and womanhood had not changed their relations. Other men might meet her scorn in their advances, but never Bob. Oh, they had been the best of friends until—— Bob put that recollection away from him, though even the hint of it in his mind made his cheeks flame. He thought he knew why Wingate was coming to the ranch. And he was being "smooth" about it. He was pretending to need medical care so that he might have an excuse. Bob hated a "smooth" man as much as he hated a deceitful one.

But he could not voice his feelings about the girl to her father. That would be opening some of the deep, secret places in his nature. However, he had to see the girl, on another matter.

"Mona home?" he asked.

"Yes, she is now," MacLaren answered. "She wasn't when Wingate was here. I'll call her."

He left the room. Bob's dislike of Wingate was a lively hatred now. So Wingate had made so bold as to ask for the girl, had he? Well, he'd better keep away from her. And then he smiled to himself grimly. For all the long years they had been friends he was the last man in the world who had any right to say who should see her and who should not.

There was a step outside the door and the girl stood in the doorway. She stood looking at him for a moment before she advanced into the room, and he eagerly fixed his eyes on her face. Then a bleak look came into his eyes. No, she had not changed toward him. She was as hard, as unrelenting as she had been on that night eighteen months ago when he had pleaded with her, tried so hard to make her understand. Her dark brows were drawn together, her lips were tight, vividly red lips which he had been so bold, so mad as to kiss. And no warm light of welcome was in her eyes.

"Well, you came," she said. "It's about time. You are needed here. At least a man is needed here."

"Mebbe," he said, "I can scare up a man to do whatever job of work is necessary. I got a friend or two here and there."

"You needn't be sarcastic," she said, and she was suddenly cool. "I'm not here to quarrel with you. I just want to give you a little information."

In his breast Bob's heart was thumping dully. He wished he could be cool, as she was; but he could not control the tumult of his blood. Many a night he

had lain in the forest and had thought of her as he looked at the stars. In cold days he had thought of her; in hot, heavy afternoons. Hour upon hour, always, he had thought of her—and had suffered.

But though she was so near now, having seated herself a little way from him, she was as inaccessible to any influence of his as if the widest cañon in the mountains separated them. She was letting him know by every action, by every tone, that she had not relented, even though she had sent him that note.

He thought of the note again, as he had thought of it so often. It had lain, like a thing alive, in his breast pocket, over his heart. He took it out now, with a sudden, swift movement, and held it out to her.

"There's your note," he said.

"Why, I don't want it," she said, in a little surprise.

"Take it," he said thickly. "It's the first thing of yours I ever had. I can't keep it. I have no right to keep it, and still, somehow, I couldn't bear to tear it up."

She accepted the piece of paper with fingers which trembled a little. She opened it and read it, though she knew just what it contained:

"Come home. Your father needs you."

Bob kept his eyes on the note while she held it. He wondered if she noticed how worn it was. From opening it and folding it again and again, he had worn the creases so that the paper was almost ready to fall apart. He supposed he had read it a thousand times.

"Just what is it my father needs me for?" he asked.

"You've been home?"

"Certainly."

"Didn't your father tell you anything?"

"No, but I can see there is trouble at the ranch. What's become of all the boys that was there? I see there are all new hands."

"They left when they heard your father was going to sell out. You couldn't blame them for that. Work isn't so plentiful as it was, and they had to take new places when they could get them. The general atmosphere isn't any too good around here, either. The men have heard the talk that wages will have to come down and there's a good deal of dissatisfaction. Two dollars a day is still being paid, and the ranchers say they can't afford it."

"No, you couldn't blame the boys," he agreed, "but I don't see why they should quit my father. He isn't going to sell out. That's just a wild rumor. He wouldn't sell out. He'd die if he left his place."

"He told my father he was going to sell out," she said. "He told him he was going to buy a bungalow over at the county seat and keep a cow and raise chickens."

Bob sat staring at her stupidly. That old cattleman settle down to raising chickens on a handful of earth? It was preposterous.

"I know he has been looking at several places in town," Mona added. "I went with him once last week."

Bob was stunned for a space. Turn this over in his mind as he would, he couldn't make anything out of it. His father in a bungalow, with other bungalows on each side of him, shutting him in! Those old eyes, used to far stretches, stopped in their gazing by walls of houses all about! And yet Mona had never been an alarmist. She wouldn't tell him this if it weren't so.

And then he remembered his father's guns on the table at home. Gun play was not so frequent as it had been in the old days. His father would not have got out his guns unless there was something deadly afoot. And if there were, it was something about which he would not question Mona. That was

man's stuff. She had done all he could expect her to do. She had sent him a warning, even though she hated him.

He rose and stood above her. She did not look at him, but he had a feeling that she was listening intently for what he might say.

"If you hear anybody mentioning that my father is going to sell out, you just tell 'em that he hasn't a foot of land for sale," he told her.

Her head came up and she flashed a look at him, a look which sent flame sweeping through his veins. She was praising him with her eyes.

"And if anybody has any business at our place you just tell 'em to see me," he added.

He walked to the door and opened it. He was aware, even in the tumult of his mind, that she had followed him and was standing just behind him. He turned about and looked at her eagerly Again she was very cool, distant.

"I'll tell anybody that asks," she said.

"You still hate me, don't you?" he asked.

She threw up a quick hand as if she fended off a blow. He expected her to storm at him as she had done before, but she only said quietly, strangely:

"Not half as much as I hate myself."

At that he stared, but her face gave him no clew, and he opened the door and stepped out into the night.

For three quarters of the way home he raced his horse, but then he drew him down to a walk. He wanted to think. Heaven knew, he had enough to think about. He was worried about his father. Was it possible that the old man was being forced into doing something that he did not want to do? Had some one somehow got hold of him? That didn't seem possible. There were no black pages in the book of his father's past. His life had been as clean and true as the life of any man could possibly be. Bob knew that, felt it. And yet he had been considering giving up his land and his stock, things as dear to him as life itself. It was very strange.

As he neared home he had made up his mind what he was going to do. He was going to have a straightforward talk with his father. He was going to put plain, blunt questions to him, even though his father had always shunned questions and questioners. He would get this matter straightened out.

He cantered on for a while in the soft road and then he walked the horse again. He came up to the gate making little sound. His hands were on it to open it, when he stopped, rigid.

A man had come out of the bunk house, and Bob knew him at once as Screw-eye Frick, the horse breaker. There could be no mistaking that ungainly figure. Also, he was smaller than the other men who had been before the bunk house, Bob had noticed.

In one hand he carried a bridle, and in the other a quirt. Bob's first notion was that he was going to set off on a ride through the night. Bob decided that this would be a good time for him not to come back to the ranch. This ranch was no place for a man like him. He'd let him get his horse and then he would pay him off if he had anything coming and tell him not to return.

With this thought in mind he started to open the gate. Then he saw that the man was not making for the big corral but for the smaller one in which the colts were kept.

"Something wrong here, too," Bob told himself. "He isn't so industrious as to be breaking one of those colts at night."

He stepped back to his horse and drew the reins over its head. Then he climbed the fence, and seeing the man's back was to him as he climbed the corral fence, he sped to the shadow of the house and so made his way to the fence.

The man circled about the corral among the colts that were still on their

feet and finally stopped some distance from a beautiful black and began to edge up to it. He held the bridle extended so that the colt could see it. Inch by inch he advanced till he could reach out and touch the colt's nose. The animal stood still, alertly curious, as Bob could see, as to what all this meant. The horse breaker slowly lifted the bridle till it touched the colt's nose. Then he sprang back and struck the animal violently with the quirt. It shuddered back, wheeled, and ran away, shaking its head.

Bob saw what the horse breaker was trying to do. He was trying to teach the colt that a bridle meant a blow.

Bob put his hands on top of the fence and vaulted it. He was almost upon the horse breaker before the latter knew that he was near. Then the man wheeled, dropping the bridle and the quirt. Bob plunged forward, seized him, and bore him to the ground, his hand seeking the man's throat.

## CHAPTER III.

### A CLEAN-UP.

THE struggle was brief, Frick being no match for Bob. In a moment he stopped clawing at Bob's hands and lay still. Bob stood up and looked down at the man, as the latter lay with his face turned up to the night sky. Presently Frick opened his eyes, rubbed his throat, and got slowly to his feet.

"What do yuh think yuh're doin', fella?" he demanded. "What yuh gettin' pooched up about an' jumpin' on me like that for?"

"Trying to ruin that colt, were you?" Bob exclaimed. "Trying to fix him so he would never be good for anything. I thought my father hired you as a horse breaker."

"So he did, and I am a horse breaker. Oh, I've heard about yuh. I know yuh're a fancy buckaroo with a leg up on the trophy at the round-up, but yuh'll never know as much about horses as I do if yuh live to be a hundred."

Bob paid no attention to the boast. He had heard it made a hundred times or more by different horsemen. Each man, in his own estimation, knew more about horses than any other man. What Bob was concerned about was why the fellow had treated the colt as he had. Was he merely a brute who enjoyed mistreating an animal or had he a more sinister reason?

"You know as well as I do that that's no way to treat a horse," Bob said. "We want those horses broken to ride. I suppose you were trying to win that colt's confidence by frightening it, with a bridle that he's got to wear some time shaken in front of him. Come now, fella. What are you trying to do? What's your game?"

"Game?" Frick cried angrily. "I ain't got no game. I can ride that colt this minute. I can ride any——"

"You'll never ride that colt or any horse on this ranch," Bob declared. "Answer my question."

"I ain't got no answer to it."

"All right."

Bob seized him by the collar, jerked him from his feet, and dragged him to the fence.

"Climb over," he ordered.

Frick scrambled over the fence. As he straightened up on the other side, he looked as if he were about to bolt, but seemed to think better of it as Bob vaulted the fence again.

"Come into the house," Bob said.

Frick marched along beside him with defiance in his stride. Bob opened the kitchen door and urged him inside. He saw that there was a light in the other room, for it flowed beneath the door; and he opened that door and ushered Frick into the room beyond. Clifford was sitting beside the table, apparently having been doing nothing. Bob conjectured that, in Bob's absence, the older man had been sitting there thus

idly, thinking about all the things he undoubtedly had to think about.

He lifted his head slowly and fixed his eyes on Frick's face. Frick returned the gaze insolently.

"What's up, Bob?" Clifford asked gently. "What's this fella been doin'?"

"He's got a queer method of breaking a colt—abusing him," Bob said. "I brought him in here to find out what the big idea is."

"Go ahead and find out then," Clifford said.

Bob leaned back against the table, folded his arms, and looked into Frick's eyes.

"How about it, buddy?" he asked.

"I ain't got nothin' to say," Frick retorted. "Yuhr father hired me as a horse breaker. If he wants me to break his horses, I'll break 'em in my own way. If he don't want me, why, all he has got to do is to say so. I ain't dependin' on him for a job."

"Got another job waitin' for you, have you?" Bob asked.

It was only a chance question, idly put; but Frick started and a little flush crept up into his cheeks.

"A good man ain't out of a job for long, is he?" he demanded.

"Where are you from?" Bob asked.

"Puh! From? Where do yuh suppose I'm from? All over, of course."

"Where did you work last?"

"Why, that ain't none of your business," Frick cried. "If yuh don't like my style, yuh can fire me. And that is all yuh can do. Yuh jumped me out there in the corral, and I could make trouble for yuh on that proposition. Yuh needn't think yuh can ride me. I know my rights. Yuh ain't scarin' me none by them guns yuh are wearin', neither. I reckon yuh ain't goin' to shoot an unarmed man."

"I can run you off this ranch," Bob said.

"Yuh don't need to run me off. I ain't stayin' where I can't do my work in my own way. I know about yuh. Yuh got a swelled nut, but that don't make no hit with me. Yuh think because yuh got a reputation over this State that all men is goin' to be afraid of yuh. Well, I ain't."

"Oh, you're shootin' off your mouth considerable," Bob retorted. "How much have you got comin'?"

"Eight dollars," the man answered.

Clifford drew out the table drawer and counted the money from a little pile within it. Frick took it and turned toward the door.

"You can stay in the bunk house till morning," Bob said. "We are not drivin' a man out into the night."

"I'm goin' now," Frick said.

"You've got a horse?"

"Cer'nly."

His hand was on the knob. As he opened the door, he half turned.

"Yuh think this is the end of this, don't yuh?" he spluttered. "Well, it ain't. Oh, I know yuh think yuh are a hell-bender, but lemme tell yuh there are others. We'll check up with yuh later on."

"Just a minute," Bob said, striding after him. "You say 'we'll' check up. Who will?"

"Yuh think I ain't got no friends?" Frick cried.

Bob read the man thoroughly now. Ordinarily he was sullen, resentful, suspicious, envious, a prey to all the lowest emotions. Now, Bob believed, he felt himself humiliated. He was by way of being a specialist, and he had doubtless received his meed of homage in the past for his horsemanship. Inordinately vain, he had thrived on that till he had arrived at a condition of unwarranted arrogance. Now, however, because of his swift and unexpected humiliation, he was angry, with a violent, unreasoning anger. If that anger were played upon, Bob saw that the bragging words which were trembling on his tongue would fall from it.

"Friends?" Bob said sneeringly. "I don't know who would be a friend to a low-down coyote like you."

"Thasso?" Frick almost screamed. "Well, lemme tell yuh that every man in that bunk house is my friend. Every man out there will stick along with me. Yuh got work pilin' up on yuh here, what with this dry spell. Lemme see yuh get it done!"

"Oh, we can get men," Bob said, with sudden, assumed cheerfulness. "I thought mebbe you were talking about powerful, influential friends!"

But Frick would not rise to that, apparently. He seemed to take a quick grip on himself. Some of the passion died out of his face, and it hardened.

"What yuh don't know ain't goin' to hurt yuh none," he asserted, and he started through the door.

"Just a minute," Bob said. "So long as all you boys are lined up together, mebbe you better all ride together. What do you think?"

"Yuh mean yuh got the nerve to drive us all off at the same time?"

"You just watch me do it."

He had unbuttoned his coat when he had first come into the room, and now he had his hands in his pockets. Frick's eyes went to his guns.

"Well, I'm ridin'," he said, a little lamely.

He stepped through the door now, and Bob followed him. Behind Bob came Clifford.

"You needn't come," Bob called to him over his shoulder.

But he heard his father follow him, and he smiled to himself. This was not the action of a man who intended to quit his ranch and raise chickens in town. He guessed that a little excitement might stir blood which had gone somewhat sluggish in old veins.

Outside Frick headed straight for the bunk house and disappeared inside. Presently his raised voice came to the two waiting men.

"Everybody up! The world-famous buckaroo has give us orders to ride. We are all fired—pitched out in the middle of the night. Come on, yuh fellas. Git out of a place where yuh ain't welcome."

There was a stir within the bunk house. Presently the men, pulling on the last of their clothing, poured out into the yard. They stood blinking sleepily at Bob and Clifford, who had advanced till they were a few feet from the bunk-house door.

As usual the men needed a spokesman, and as usual a spokesman was at hand. A burly, heavy-faced man stepped forward, taking off his big hat and brushing back his tousled hair as he did so.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "What are you routin' us out in the night for after a hard day's work? Ain't we entitled to our rest?"

"Yes, you must be exhausted by your labors," Bob said. "You've been working yourself to death. But I didn't order you out in the night. Your screw-eyed friend did that. I told him he could stay the night if he wanted to."

"We're all fired, are we?"

"You sure are. You can travel with the dawn."

"Oh, we can travel now, far as that goes. But how do you git this way, fella? You're just out to have a good time all by yourself, ain't you?"

"With me behind him," Clifford broke in, in his quiet voice.

"Didn't you round us fellas up, sayin' you needed men desp'rit?" the man demanded.

"You've been no good to me since you've been here, Astel," Clifford retorted. "You haven't done anything much but lie around the bunk house."

"You ain't been stirrin' your own self any," Astel declared. "You been moonin' in the house there ever since I been here, for one."

"That'll do for that kind of talk,"

Bob said. "You can stay here the rest of the night if you want to. You can go now if you want to do that. Suit yourselves."

"You're a big talker when you got a coupla guns on you, ain't you?" Astel demanded. "You know there ain't a gun in this outfit."

For answer to that Bob unfastened his belt and handed it to his father. Clifford took it and put it on the ground behind him. However, he drew two guns from his own pockets and stood there with them in his dropped hands.

"Bluff, eh?" Astel snarled out. "Son hands over his guns. Father draws his. That's the idea of fair play round here, huh?"

"I'm an old man," Clifford replied. "I aim to defend myself in any way I can. You been talkin' pretty large, Astel. 'Bout time you shut your mouth, I'm tellin' you."

Astel shrugged his shoulders and started toward the corral gate. "I was aimin' to break that buckaroo in two," he said, "but I don't fight with my hands under no other man's guns."

Anger which had been smoldering in Bob leaped into bright flame now. It was a dangerous anger, the anger of a rather easy-going, good-natured man.

He strode after Astel, clapped a hand on his shoulder, and wheeled him about. Astel wore high-heeled boots, brand new, and he had not accustomed himself to them as yet. They had replaced a pair of old, run-down boots, and he was clumsy in them.

Before he fully got his balance he slashed out at Bob with his right fist. He missed, and Bob countered with a powerful blow to the chin. Astel tottered back on his high heels, grotesquely clawing the air, and went over backward and lay his full length. He was not out, however, and he got unsteadily to his feet.

"Gimme a gun," he panted when he had got his breath. "I'll shoot this thing out with yuh. I'll kill yuh."

Bob turned, walked over to his guns, picked them up, and went back to the man. He held out a gun. Astel made a move as if to take it, but his companions ran to him and seized him and drew him back.

"Don't do that," some one argued. "You can't get away with it. That guy is too good. You can't pull nothin'—his father right there with a coupla guns. Cut it and come on."

Bob saw Astel's rage die out of him. One moment he was a very living picture of fury; the next he was a cautious man weighing his anger against his peril.

"Yes," he said, covering up his cowardice, "that's the way it'd be. Even if I got that fella—or when I got him, I mean—the old man would plug me. What chance has a fella got against two gunmen? Come on. Let's get out of here."

In ten minutes they were riding toward the gate. As they passed through it, Bob saw Astel turn in his saddle.

"We'll meet again, fella," he called back.

They rode away into the night. Bob turned to his father.

"I reckon we will meet again, dad," he said. "There seems to be something in the air. Let's go into the house and mill this thing over."

They went into the house and sat down on opposite sides of the table, the guns between them. Bob looked across at his father.

"What's this I hear about your selling out?" he asked.

"Well," said Clifford, "I come to the conclusion I might as well. I'm gettin' old, you know, Bob."

"Old? Fiddlesticks; you're just in your prime. Sixty-one, aren't you?"

"Sixty-one, yes. Well, it got kinda lonesome when I was here by myself,

and I figured I would get me a little place and move into town. I could raise some chickens and go to the picture shows and so on."

"And droop and die," said Bob. "You're not going to do that, dad. I'm home. I'm home to stay. You won't be a bit lonely while I'm here, will you?"

"I never get lonely when I got you, Bob," Clifford said.

They had been closer than father and son usually are. Bob saw now that he had not thought much about his father when he had rushed away to join the rangers. He had been seething with his own bitter emotions, and he had not thought what he was leaving his father to, a big ranch to be managed, a lonely house to live in. And yet it was not like his father to want to quit. He was not really old. The ranch would not have proved too big a job for him. Something queer was in the air in his intention to quit, too. Something queer was in the air about everything, Bob felt.

"You haven't made any agreement to sell, have you, dad?" he asked.

"Oh, no. I only talked the matter over with Wingate. I——"

"Wingate! I don't like that guy, dad."

"Don't you?" his father asked dryly. "Why, he seems to be a pushing kind of a fella. He even asked me to put a price on all my land. I told him that if he would take everything, stock and all, I might make a figure of eight dollars an acre. I told him we could inventory the stock and the rest of the stuff."

"Eight dollars an acre," Bob cried. "Why, dad, your land, taken all together, is worth ten or twelve dollars an acre."

"I know it, but it was to be a cash deal," Clifford explained. "I would pull down a big lot of money all in a lump, Bob. With what I got in the bank, I would be independent and so would you after I am gone. It wouldn't be a bad deal at all."

"Well, you're not going to sell, are you?" Bob pleaded. "At least, you're not going to sell to Wingate. I tell you I don't like him."

"I'm not going to sell to Wingate—now," Clifford said. He hesitated and then he looked his son squarely in the eyes. "Wingate is runnin' a bunch of sheep on his leased land next to mine in the mountains. I got my cattle up on the mountain meadows."

"Those sheep will be getting over on your land," Bob said. "You can't stand for that, dad. With the weather as dry as it is, you will need all the feed you can get. If those sheep get over there, where will you take your cattle to right now? Everything is burned up."

"Wingate has got some half-wit herders up there," Clifford said slowly, "but I ain't dependin' on 'em. I got Weaver an' Campbell up there watchin' things for me."

"Oh, Weaver and Campbell didn't quit then?" Bob asked joyfully.

"They didn't quit. And them sheep better not go strayin'——"

He stopped and his eyes went from Bob's face to the guns on the table. Bob understood why the old cattleman had got out his little-used weapons. Bob's eyes went to his own guns.

Wingate had better keep his sheep at home!

## CHAPTER IV.

### A ROUND-UP.

BOB strode down the main street of the county seat next morning. He had started from the ranch at sunup, and he was looking for the men who had formerly worked for his father. As he had neared town he had inquired along the way and had found that none of the men had been employed at any of the ranches. He conjectured that they had decided to have a fling in town before they sought new jobs.

His search of the restaurants, pool rooms, and soft-drink places failed to turn up any of the men. He was about to start for a sales and livery stable in the outskirts of town when he saw one of the men, Reedley by name, standing at the curb. As Bob approached him, he saw that Reedley was engaged in staring at a new pair of boots which shone blackly. There was a satisfied look in his eyes as he raised them to Bob's face when Bob accosted him.

Reedley was a man of about forty, and Bob had been friendly with him as he had been with all his father's men in the past. Reedley might have been expected to hail his arrival with delight. But he only turned his eyes on his new boots again.

"Had 'em shined four times this mornin'," he said. "They look pretty good now."

"They do for a fact," Bob agreed. "It's too bad a shine won't stand rough usage. You're about to lose that one. Where are Tigert and Wallace?"

"Right in there," Reedley pointed.

Bob looked into the shine parlor. The two men he had named were perched on seats while the shiners worked industriously on their boots. The punchers found the sight so fascinating that they did not look up as Bob entered.

"Waste of good money, boys," he said. "We're ridin'."

Wallace, the youngest of the trio, and something of a dandy when he was in town, looked up and sighed.

"We have had twelve shines among us this mornin'," he said. "That's a dollar and eighty cents. These suckers is chargin' us fifteen cents a throw. But ain't that a polish? Boy!"

Bob went back to the curb and stood with Reedley. The two other men came out presently, their eyes on their polished boots.

"What's up, Bob?" Wallace asked.

"You boys are going back to work," Bob answered. "What do you think? There is work at the ranch till you can't see, and nobody to do it."

"Where's them new guys your dad picked up?" Reedley asked.

Bob explained what had happened to the news guys.

"Well, I was surprised at your dad hirin' that Screw-eye person," Reedley said. "I could have tipped your dad off to him. I been knowin' him off an' on for some years. He isn't no good nohow, Bob."

"I know it," Bob said. "Where are your horses?"

"Now, look-a-here, Bob," Reedley said. "We wasn't for quittin' the old man. You know that. But what is three workin' fellas goin' to do. The story was all about that your father was goin' to sell out and take a shack in the village. We had to slope and go lookin' for somethin' to do. Work ain't none too plentiful this year, as you may know."

"I know," Bob assented, "but my father isn't goin' to sell out. And I am home to stay."

"We got our horses stabled out here a piece," Reedley said. "We will join you any place you say."

Bob told them where he would meet them, and they turned away as if they had found a new interest in life. Their eyes were no longer on their shining boots. Bob stopped Reedley for a moment.

"Where's Perrine?" he asked. "Has he been with you boys?"

"He didn't come with us," Reedley answered. "Fella was tellin' me last night he had gone to work for Wingate."

"Herdin' sheep, is he?" Bob asked sneeringly.

"Sheep?"

"Haven't you heard that Wingate is runnin' a bunch of sheep up on the mountains?"

"Sho! I hadn't heard that. No!" He turned to the two other men, who

had stopped. "You boys step on," he said. "I got a word to say to Bob."

The men moved on and Reedley lowered his voice.

"Wingate offered all of us jobs," he said, "but we wouldn't hook up with him. He is one of these here guys that has got to have his own way. He said he would start us at two dollars a day, but he informed us that wages has got to come down. Well, mebbe we know that as well as anybody, but we didn't like his way of tellin' it. So we come into town, but Perrine, he stayed on."

"Perrine gettin' kind of meek, is he?" Bob asked.

"You should know he ain't," Reedley said hotly. "Perrine is a square shooter. I don't know nothin' about it, but I'm guessin' that Sam Weaver told him to go to work for this here Wingate. Perrine and Sam was havin' quite a confab out by the corral fence one evenin' before we left, and there was a lot of noddin' and grinnin' goin' on. And Perrine, he up and announces that he ain't comin' to town with us. He is goin' to work for Wingate.

"You boys seem to have taken Wingate's number," Bob said.

"Well, it didn't take us long," Reedley assured him. "I cer'nly am glad we are all goin' home."

"It's only fair to tell you that there may be trouble," Bob said. "Them boys that I had to run off our place ain't in any too good humor, and Wingate's runnin' sheep up there don't look any too promisin'."

"We'll be seein' you in twenty minutes," Reedley promised.

When they rode into the yard, Clifford came out of the house. He only looked at the men with a little lift of the corner of his lip, and they grinned at him. Bob continued to sit his horse while they turned theirs into the corral.

"I'll be seeing you boys after a while," he said, and he turned his horse.

He had reached the gate when he heard some one running awkwardly behind him on high-heeled boots. He looked back and saw Reedley.

"Look-a-here," Reedley said. "I know where you are goin'. You are goin' over to Wingate's to get Perrine. Now, you better let me and the other boys go with you, leastways me. This here Wingate tries to be smooth, but he is goin' to pop open some of these days. He ain't goin' to take kindly to your ridin' over to his place and grabbin' off Perrine."

"Oh, I don't think there will be any trouble this morning," Bob said. "If there is goin' to be trouble, it will come later on. I'll take a chance by myself right now."

"Well, you ought to be carryin' a gun with you," Reedley said. "You may need it."

"It isn't up to me to start the trouble," Bob said. "I wouldn't want to ride into Wingate's place with a gun on me."

"Well," Reedley said disappointedly, and he walked back to the bunk house.

Bob reached Wingate's ranch, twelve miles away, without having met any one. As he rode up to the gate he saw two men come out of the bunk house, carrying saddles and bridles. One of them was Frick, and the other was Perrine. Bob called to the latter. Both men turned about, and Frick said something hastily to Perrine. Perrine, however, dropped his saddle and bridle and came out to the gate.

Perrine was not more than twenty-five, a big, loose-jointed fellow with a perpetual smile on his lips. The smile widened to a grin of welcome as he neared Bob. He climbed the gate, wiped his hand on his shirt, and put it up to Bob.

"I've rounded up the other boys, and now I'm roundin' up you, Perrine," Bob said. "Get your horse. Let's go."

Perrine looked back over his shoulder at Frick, who was standing watching them.

"Did you know that Weaver sent me here?" he asked.

"I know it," Bob answered, "but I don't want you to stay. I'm as suspicious as Weaver is of this outfit, but we will keep to our own stamping grounds and let them make the moves. I see Wingate has taken that horse breaker on."

"Yeh, he was here this mornin' when I got up. Seemed to be makin' himself to home even before he had saw Wingate. Wingate told him to pick a man to help him get some horses from up the mountains and he picked me. Well, if you don't want me to stay here, I'm ready to go. We heard your father was goin' to sell out."

"That story certainly has got around," Bob said.

"Your father didn't deny it," Perrine offered.

"Well, he isn't going to sell," Bob said. "Get your horse and let's get out of here. I don't want any run-in with Wingate on his own place."

Perrine climbed back over the gate and went to the corral and got his horse. While he was saddling him, Frick engaged him in what seemed to be earnest and argumentative talk. Perrine did not so much as shake his head.

When Perrine joined him and they started down the road, Bob did not ask Perrine what the horse breaker had had to say, and Perrine had nothing at all to say.

They were almost to the Clifford ranch when they heard the pounding of hoofs behind them. They turned in their saddles and saw a horseman bearing swiftly down upon them.

"That may be Wingate," Bob said. "You just pull to one side and let me handle him, Perrine. We won't have any argument with him unless we have to."

"That ain't Wingate," Perrine said, as they drew up to the side of the road. "That's Sam Weaver. He got a new horse while you was away. I know that horse."

Bob felt his muscles tighten. Weaver was coming like the wind. He would not be riding like that, Bob knew, unless something had happened. Weaver dashed up to them and his horse slid to a stop with a scattering of gravel.

"Well, Bob," he shouted, "when did you get home? Durn my hide, if I ain't glad to see you."

He gripped Bob's hand, his eyes shining. Bob smiled. He and Weaver had been pals ever since Weaver had come to the ranch. In the years that had passed, Weaver had risen to be foreman, and he and Clifford were like father and son, and he and Bob like brothers.

"What's up, Sam?" Bob asked.

Sam's face hardened into the look which Bob supposed it had held before pleasure at meeting Bob had erased it.

"Plenty," he answered. "Wingate, mebbe your father told you, has turned some sheep loose on the slopes. He put some half-wit herders up there to look after them. This mornin' when me and Campbell started ridin' we seen them sheep had got over on your dad's land. They must have come over in the night. My guess is that they was driv' over there. You know, dry as it is, we are goin' to be short of feed before the summer is over. We will be feedin' alfalfa by the end of August, and after that gosh knows what we will do. If them sheep drifts over our way some more that range will be ruined for our cattle. Me and Campbell got the sheep back, and then we rounded them herders up and read the riot act to them. It looks to me like them sheep was put over there a-purpose to make trouble. Your father sent us up there without no guns, but I've come down for mine and Campbell's. If this guy Wingate is lookin' for somethin', he is sure goin' to get it."

Bob knew that the situation was seri-

ous. He had seen fights between cattlemen and sheepmen before. As a ranger he had settled some of those fights. He knew nothing to rouse the ire of a cattleman as to have sheep intrude on his cattle land.

"What's the matter with this Wingate guy, Sam?" Bob asked. "What makes him so cussed mean?"

A flush which leaped into Sam's face puzzled Bob. Sam seemed to have thought of something which embarrassed him.

"Oh, gosh," he said evasively, "some men is just born mean, I reckon. Well, the point is, is your dad goin' to kick on me and Campbell havin' our guns. I don't trust this Wingate or his men. He has got some new men in his outfit. I seen them ridin' out this mornin'. They was some of them fellas that your dad picked up when the boys went to town."

"Those guys seemed to be layin' around cussed handy when my father needed men, didn't they?" Bob asked.

"Yes," Sam agreed, "and they seemed to know where to ride to when they wanted jobs. How come they left our place?"

Bob explained, and Sam nodded.

"They're all newcomers around here," he said, "and I wouldn't put nothin' past any of them. Well, let's get down to the house and see your father about this gun matter."

They found Clifford alone at the house, the men having gone back across the foothills. Bob let Sam explain about the sheep, and Sam wound up with the statement that he had come for his own and Campbell's guns.

"You can use your judgment, Sam," Clifford said quietly.

"They say the way to insure peace is to prepare for war," Sam said, "and I reckon that is a pretty solid way of lookin' at it."

"Them guns are to protect you and Campbell and to protect our property, Sam," Clifford said, as Sam came out of the bunk house with the guns.

"Oh, sure," Sam agreed. "Well, I must be gettin' back. I don't want to leave Campbell up there alone any longer than I have to."

He sprang to his saddle, but he held back his horse as it started. He looked down at father and son. Their ears, too, had caught the sound which Sam's had caught.

"Somebody's ridin' this way like I was ridin' a bit ago," said Sam. "Here, you, Bob. Mebbe we are goin' to have ructions right down here."

He handed a gun down to Bob, and Bob, after a moment of hesitation, took it.

"How about you, Mr. Clifford?" Sam asked.

Clifford's right hand had been in his pocket. He shook his head.

"I am set, Sam," he said.

Sam slipped down from his horse and the three men grouped themselves together as the sound of the galloping horse came nearer. In a few minutes Wingate rode into the yard.

"Not as smooth as he was," Bob murmured.

Wingate's face was black as he rode up to the three men. His eyes traveled from Clifford to Sam, and at length came to rest on Bob's face.

"What do you mean by comin' up to my ranch and takin' my men away?" he demanded.

"One man," Bob corrected.

"Well, one man. What do you mean by that?"

"He worked here long before he worked for you," Bob retorted. "He is of age and a free agent. He seemed to know what he wanted to do."

"Where is he now?"

"Back in the hills some place."

"I want to see him."

"We're not going to call him for you," Bob declared. "There is plenty of work on this ranch right now. The

men will be too busy from now on to have time for visitors."

"I think you mean by that that I'm not welcome on your place," Wingate said.

"Why, you can take it that way if you like."

"Yet you come to my place whenever you like, do you?"

"I'll never set foot on your land," Bob answered. "In fact I didn't this morning. Perrine came out to me, in the road."

"Hereafter you keep away from my place. You hear me?"

"I got a fine set of ears," Bob said. "And of course your order goes two ways. My, but you change fast, don't you, Wingate? One minute you are as nice as pie. The next you are ravin'. Well, take this: You not only keep off my father's land, but you keep your sheep off his land."

"Sheep? What do you mean?"

"You don't know your sheep have been over on our land?"

"I didn't know it."

"You know it now," Bob said.

"If you don't keep your sheep at home, you are likely not to have any sheep, Wingate," Clifford put in quietly.

Wingate's eyelids drooped. Bob did not know what look had been in the eyes while they were thus covered, but the eyes held a little glitter of mirth when they were again unveiled.

"Just what do you do with sheep when they trespass in this country?" he asked.

"Specifications ain't necessary," Clifford said. "Just keep them to home."

Wingate sat his horse for a moment, looking down at the older man.

"Oh, well," he said with a quick laugh, "it's not worth fussing about. There ain't no need for us to talk about your land and my land. It'll all be my land presently. I've come to pay you option money on everything you got, Clifford. I'll hand you the cash in a lump just as soon as you get your deeds and abstracts ready."

"I ain't sellin'," Clifford declared.

"What!"

Wingate's eyes widened with what seemed to be surprise. His gaze roved from one face to another as if he sought enlightenment in those faces.

"Why, Clifford," he said at last, "you gimme your word you would sell. Everybody knows that you have been plannin' to sell. The story is all over the country. Even your men quit on the strength of it, so they could grab off new jobs some place."

"Yeah," said Clifford with deceiving mildness. "You was very industrious in spreadin' that story, Wingate. Why you done it I don't know."

"I didn't spread it," Wingate asserted. "You spread it yourself."

"I didn't. I spoke to very few people about it. First thing I knowed everybody I met had learned that old Clifford was goin' to quit his ranch and move into town. Whoever I told besides you, Wingate, didn't talk much. How did the story get about if you didn't spread it?"

"You never denied it, did you?"

"I wasn't wastin' my breath."

"Well," Wingate returned, "you passed me your word that you would sell to me, and I expect you to keep to your bargain. That is, unless your word is no good."

"What was it you told him, dad?" Bob asked.

"He asked me did I want to sell. He made me a cash proposition. I told him I was thinkin' about sellin'."

"No more than that?"

"Not a word."

"And now you don't want to sell?"

"Now I don't want to sell."

"He gave me his word that he would sell at the figure I named," Wingate broke in. "Everybody has accepted the story that he is going to sell. Why, he even looked at places in town. We'll

see if a man can break his word in this country and get by with it. He gave me his promise."

Bob turned around from giving his father a quick smile. The smile died on his lips as he faced Wingate.

"Wingate," he said coldly, "you lie."

## CHAPTER V.

### AROUND MIDNIGHT.

WINGATE'S face whitened, but Bob thought it was more from anger than from fear. He had scrutinized Wingate while he had passed the lie to him, and he had come to the conclusion that Wingate, no matter what else he was, was not a coward. He was used to having his own way, Bob suspected. And lately, according to MacLaren, he had made a great deal of money. This, Bob supposed, had not lessened his natural arrogance.

For a moment Wingate did not speak, but he kept his eyes steadily on Bob's face. The sudden pallor in his face gave way to a flush. His eyes hardened and narrowed.

"Strong language, boy," he said.

"Strong language, for a fact," Bob said, "but this case seems to require strong language. I called you a liar, and so you are as long as you say my father broke his word. He has never done that. If he had told you he would sell out, all he has would be as good as yours. You called him a liar as much as I called you one, though you didn't use the word."

"In the country I come from, when one man calls another a liar he is all set to back it up," Wingate stated. "I expect you are ready to do that."

"You betcha!"

"With a gun on you," Wingate said sneeringly.

"I'm wearin' a gun from this time on."

"You're good with a gun, are you?"

"Fair, so they say."

"Well, I have no gun," Wingate said, "but I will have one from this time forth, I reckon there's no chance to settle this matter to-day."

"Why, it don't need to be settled with a gun," Bob said. "Any way you like will suit me."

"You're a good talker when you've got a coupla armed men beside you, ain't you?" Wingate went on sneeringly.

"Why, you and I can go up the road together," Bob suggested.

"And have these two men follow us?"

"They wouldn't know where we had gone."

"Get your horse."

"Take mine, Bob," Sam said. "Mebbe that will lead this guy to believe that I won't follow you."

Bob mounted the horse. Wingate turned his horse around.

"We better settle about them sheep before you go, Wingate," Clifford said. "They have got to stay off my land."

"I've got herders up there with instructions to keep them on my land," Wingate retorted. "I'm no sheep-herder myself."

"If you ain't no sheep-herder, why did you bring them sheep in here?" Clifford demanded. "You must have knowed they would make trouble."

"When I buy land or lease it, I put it to any use I like," Wingate said.

"Well, there ain't going to be no sheep running loose in this country," Clifford said. "You can just remember that."

"I'll keep my sheep."

"You may have some mutton on your hands before you get through," Clifford cried. "Get him out of here, Bob. I don't want to lose my temper."

"I'll remember what you say," Wingate said, as he rode off.

Bob followed him. In the road Wingate set his horse at a gallop. He did not slacken his speed as they neared his ranch.

"This is as far as we go," Bob called to him. "I'm not going up where your gang of roughnecks is."

"I'll tell 'em you said they were a gang of roughnecks," Wingate said, as he pulled down his horse.

"Tell 'em anything you like," Bob snapped out as he leaped to the ground.

Wingate followed him. They stood facing each other for a moment. Wingate was the bigger man, but he looked as if he would be the clumsier. Also he was several years older than Bob.

"Everything goes, I reckon," Wingate said grinning.

"Everything," Bob agreed.

He understood what Wingate was depending upon. He was depending upon his strength to bear Bob down. Once he had him down he would hurt him in any way he could. Bob decided to keep away from him. Suddenly Wingate leaped in, his arms extended. Bob met him with a blow in the face, a blow so fast that Wingate could not avoid it. His head snapped back and he retreated.

"Boxer, huh?" he grunted.

"Yeah, like this," said Bob.

He darted in, stopped suddenly, took another step forward, his shoulders weaving. Twice he struck Wingate before he stepped back. Wingate was bleeding from the nose and the mouth, and that questioning look which comes to a man who senses defeat was in his eyes. He held himself back in indecision.

"Well, come on in, Wingate," Bob invited. "You can't win this fight by holding back that way."

Wingate suddenly rushed in, the taunt robbing him of his caution. Bob promptly knocked him down with a swinging blow to the jaw. Wingate lay for a moment, looking up at the sky. Bob knew, however, that he was not out. The blow had not been powerful enough for that.

"If you're satisfied, Wingate, I am," he said. "You haven't a chance in the world in this thing. You're a rough-and-tumble fighter. You don't know how to use your fists."

Wingate got slowly to his feet. Bob saw that he wanted to quit, but that his pride was urging him to continue. He stood looking at his grinning antagonist.

"You better quit, Wingate," Bob said. "You know, you got a bad stomach. This isn't going to do it any good. If I hit you in the stomach it might have serious consequences."

He figured that Wingate was a man who could not take a joke, least of all in these circumstances, and Wingate proved that by leaping in. Bob struck him, hard enough, he believed, to put him down; but apparently he had not correctly measured the blow, for Wingate continued to bore in and then he had his hands on Bob. Bob tried to shake off the grip, but could not. Wingate's arms were about him and Wingate was attempting to force him to his knees. Bob's anger was as swift as any normal young man's, and he lost his temper now. He had been a fool, he perceived, not to have put all his strength into his blows. Wingate was not a man to be played with. Now that the fight was going in the fashion which he liked best, he would be ruthless.

When Wingate had seized him, his left hand had been up and Wingate's clutch was about his waist. His right hand was pinioned, but his left was free. As Wingate exerted all his strength to bear him down, Bob curved blow after blow over Wingate's shoulder against the man's jaw. Even so strong a man as Wingate could not withstand that battering, and he had to loosen his hold and throw up his arms to protect his face. As the hands went up, Bob shot a last blow and it caught Wingate full on the side of the jaw. He tumbled down in a heap.

Bob stood back and waited. Wingate was only half conscious, and it was some time before he stirred. After

another interval he got to his feet. He stood, swaying.

"I think we had better call this off, Wingate," Bob said. "I don't want to hurt you any more."

Wingate began to curse. His eyes roved the road as if he sought a weapon which he might seize. He found none, but Bob saw him suddenly stiffen.

Bob's eyes flashed to the roadside where he had seen Wingate's glance go as it failed to pick up any object in the road. He saw Frick standing there, and Frick had a leveled gun in his hand.

Bob's own right hand darted to his pocket where his gun lay, but he did not complete the movement. He knew that he could not get out his gun in time, and an attempt to draw it would be an excuse for Frick to fire.

"Why don't you go for it?" Frick jeered. "I don't see nobody stoppin' you. Wade right in, Mr. Wingate, an' give him the lickin' of his life."

Wingate looked at Bob with triumph in his eyes. He took a tentative forward step. But he seemed to decide that to lick a man while another man held a gun on him would be a little too raw. In any event he stopped.

"You see what you run up against when you tackle me, Clifford," he said. "One way or another you are always going to get the worst of it."

"If you take a step toward me, I'll bore you clean through," Bob said angrily. "Frick will undoubtedly get me, but I will get you. I will stick a bullet into you while I'm going down. You tell that sucker to put up his gun. If he doesn't, he better come shootin' the next time he and I meet. I'm tellin' you both something."

"You talk loud with your mouth, don't you?" Frick cried. "You jumped me and you run me off your place. For two cents I'd plug you where you stand."

Bob forced his anger back. He saw the need of dissembling.

"The next move seems to be up to you, Wingate," he said. "What's it to be?"

Wingate considered for a moment. What ran in his mind Bob could not, of course, guess; but suddenly his eyes lighted and he half turned to his horse.

"We'll call this thing off for the time being, Clifford," he said. "We'll meet later on. You want Frick to come shootin' the next time you and him meet, do you?"

"Oh, Frick or you or any of your outfit," Bob said, and turned toward his own horse.

As he took a step toward the animal, he watched Frick out of the corner of his eye. He hated to let this here cross-eyed coyote get the better of him like this. He had made something of a reputation for himself as a ranger, and before that as an all-around good man with horse and gun, and he didn't know just what folks would think if they saw him at the mercy of a man like the horse breaker.

Therefore the first instant that Frick went slightly off his guard Bob was aware of it. Frick was looking at Wingate questioningly; Bob believed Frick would have shot him if Wingate had nodded approval. Frick's gun hand was lowered six inches, so that Bob was out of line of the gun. Bob did not know how difficult it would be to get his gun out of his coat pocket; he had removed a gun from a pocket often enough, but he had never drawn one in an emergency.

However, he took a chance, and luck was with him. As he whirled, the gun came out, failing to catch on the cloth. It was aimed directly at Frick before Frick could recover himself.

"Well," Bob said laughing, "how about it now, Screw-eye? Make a little movement and let it have whatever meaning it will. Come right round with your gun if you got the nerve to do it."

But Screw-eye apparently did not

have the nerve. A spasm of pained disappointment twisted his ugly face, but his gun remained where it was.

"Drop it then," Bob ordered. "And then you and Wingate get to heck out of here. Oh, I know it's a public road, Wingate. Don't spring that old gag on me. There ain't room enough in this road for you and me. Where's your horse, Frick?"

"Down the road," Frick answered.

He had dropped his gun and at a motion from Bob he stepped out into the road.

"You rode after your boss when he didn't come right back, didn't you?" Bob said. "You didn't have nerve enough to ride up on us. As soon as you caught sight of us, you left your horse and sneaked up here. I'm tellin' you something, Frick: A sneaking man gets into something in this country sooner or later. Now, vamose, both of you."

Wingate started his horse and Frick followed him on foot. Bob got Frick's gun and rode back to the house.

"Hurt him bad, Bob?" was all Clifford asked.

"Not very."

"Should of," said Sam; and that ended that.

Bob saw that his father's horse was waiting. Clifford said he was going to ride up to the meadows to see how things were going. He was wearing a gun, Bob saw, and Bob did not offer to accompany him. He knew his father would not permit that.

Bob rode back into the foothills where the returned punchers were getting ready to cut out the weaned calves. He noted with dismay that some of the white-faced cattle were already beginning to look a little gaunt. The problem of feeding was going to be a hard one in this dry year. Everything was like tinder. There had been almost no rain since early spring.

Bob returned to the house with the men in the late afternoon, but his father was not there. Clifford did not arrive till after dark had fallen. He reported everything quiet on the uplands. He said that Wingate had additional herders on the job, and that they were keeping the sheep back.

Bob sat in front of the bunk house talking to the men and smoking till after nine o'clock. The men drifted off to bed then. Bob started to roll a cigarette and as he did so he found that his sore hand had stiffened. He had forgotten about it in his encounter with Wingate, and afterward it had seemed to suffer no ill effects. He examined the bandage now and discovered that blood had soaked through it.

This was no time for a man with one hand out of commission, and he decided to ride over to MacLaren's and have the doctor dress the wound again. He rose and started toward the house. He had reached the kitchen door and was about to open it when he was checked by the sound of a rider approaching down the road from the direction of Wingate's. At first he had a notion that perhaps Wingate was coming back to renew the quarrel, but then he decided that when Wingate came again, if he came at all, he would not come so openly.

He went out to the gate and stood there till a horse dashed up to it. The rider caught sight of Bob and wheeled in to the gate. It was Campbell, Weaver's side kicker. Campbell's eyes were wide and there was glistening perspiration on his forehead—he seemed excited.

"Somebody has poisoned them dang sheep of Wingate's," he said. "They are droppin' down and strewin' themselves all over the landscape. Sam thought I better hustle down and tell you."

**To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.**

# No Smoking

By

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McARDLE'S ridge had felt the lavish hand of the Maker some thousands of years before a white man cruised the dense timber on its slopes. When big lumber buyers from the East visited the West, some of McArdle's timber cruisers loaded packs on their backs, and conducted them over a trail soft with the forest rot of ages and showed them something real in the way of sticks. While the sunlight played among the treetops most of the year, direct light rarely reached the forest floor, except as stray beams filtered through. It was always cool amid the trunks, and there was a silence that penetrated to men's hearts and made them better. There were trees, scores of them, ten feet in diameter at the butt; a few better, and hundreds between four and eight feet in thickness.

The big blow of several years ago had left the ridge untouched, though it leveled thousands of trees a few miles away. Some day, of course, it would be logged. The glory would vanish and cool ridges and draws would be a tangle of snags, splintered timber, and a few twisted, living trees.

Dave Gilman had cruised timber for more years than he cared to remember. He had landed in Puget Sound from a sailing ship so long ago that he had narrowly missed marrying a pretty squaw. Having avoided the danger that had befallen two of his shipmates, Dave wedded the timber and remained true. He shed his pack, took out his pipe, then, remembering, put it away again. "Plumb forgot the no-smoking rule during this dry spell," he growled out. "Seems like whenever I get in this timber I feel like I was in a temple, and I realize just how onery I've been all my life." He looked high above where the sunlight trickled through the foliage. "This is a temple—a temple not made with hands, either. Seems to me like I read in the Bible——"

His keen eye detected a recent footprint, just the slightest depression. Caching his pack he picked up the trail and followed rapidly. It was his business, particularly in the dry season, to see that no one entered the district without a pass. It was doubtless all right, but Gilman did not take anything for granted where standing timber was concerned.

A mile farther on he stopped. "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "A match that lighted a cigarette did that!"

The match had burned completely out and had ignited a bit of dried moss,

burned an irregular circle of two feet in diameter, then died as it worked into the leaf mold, and dampness. A shout in the distance echoed, and Gilman hurried forward. A half mile beyond he caught sight of a young man and two girls. Gilman cupped his hands and bellowed "Hey! Wait a minute!"

The three regarded him curiously. The girls were pretty, and the hiking costumes they wore were expensive and almost practical. The man was dressed for the woods with equal care. He was puffing on a cigarette. Gilman jerked the cigarette from the man's mouth and ground the last spark into the dirt. His eyes were blazing.

"Come with me!" he barked out.

"Now hold on, my man," snapped out the younger. "You don't know who you are talking to."

"I read the papers, and I have a hunch, but so far as that is concerned, I don't give a hang who I'm talking to. Come on!"

"You'd better go, Wayne," one of the girl's whispered. "He is enraged, and what is more important—armed."

"I'm Wayne McArdle," he said, "and I've a permit to enter this district, with my party, and fish."

"I'll take your word on the permit, but no man has a right to smoke or start a fire in this district. You know it! That rule goes for everybody. No exceptions. Come on with me!"

He led the way back in silence and pointed to the burned spot. "Your match did that!"

"Sure, and the moss and leaf mold was so damp it burned itself out," McArdle retorted. "I'm——"

"Don't tell me who you are. You're the son of the last man of a line of men!" The distinction was not lost on McArdle. He flushed again, half advanced, then changed his mind. "Now you may go. Remember, no smoking!"

McArdle and his two companions moved away in silence, then the youth exclaimed: "I should have slapped his mouth for that. Of course I'll have dad discharge him. That's the trouble; give these ignorant workmen a bit of authority and they lose their heads. I hated to swallow his words and attitude, but I'm hanged if I'll bandy words with a—servant."

"Is it true there is a no-smoking rule in the timber, Wayne?" the girl inquired.

"Yes, during the dry season, but it's not going to apply to me on my own land, or my father's land, which is the same thing. Now let's forget it! Bill Dixon should be along soon, unless he's lost. We'll leave our lunches here and start fishing. There's a darb of a beaver dam a half mile upstream. We can get the limit there, but don't worry about the limit—no game wardens about here."

Gilman reflected seriously as he returned to his pack. Perhaps he had gone too far. He knew that young McArdle, petted and spoiled, was both the pride and disappointment of his father. One man who had disputed Wayne McArdle's ideas had been promptly discharged. In another year Gilman would be entitled to a pension. It was a pleasant thought in case he met with illness or accident. Inwardly he had no thought of retiring. He wanted to die in the timber with his boots on, scaling a stand, perhaps, or fighting fire. When a man retired he was through; he pronounced his own death sentence. With abrupt grimness he set his jaw.

"I've never played favorites," he growled out. "And I can't begin now. The no-smoking rule is for the protection of timber—nothing else. And the boy? He's got to go through fire, the fire of adversity, and he'll come forth tempered or—slag."

His pack was heavy, for he carried a five-gallon can of gasoline for a water-pump motor at one of the fire-fighting points scattered along the ridge. Water, in time, had saved many a menacing

situation, and Gilman believed in a good supply and a little more.

He breathed deeply as he picked up the pack, placed it on a log, and squirmed into the straps. His muscles grew tense and he paused, frozen to the spot like an animal hiding from danger. Almost fearfully he sniffed the air. There came more than coolness scented with the tang of living firs as he breathed. He knew it for what it was—burning pitch! A hopeless cry escaped his lips and again he ran down the trail. There was but one spot where the timber was dead and dry, and this was dry timber burning. Ahead the trees thinned, a deer bounded into view, and a grouse whirred over his head seeking a haven in the green forest. Already the eggs in its nest were cracking with the heat.

A few moments later green timber was at his back and he was facing a seething monster of forking tongues that leaped and crawled through the sun-dryed mass of trunks and boughs and dead weeds.

"I need a man," he muttered. "But first——"

The tried weapon of the defense came to his hand—back firing. Along the narrow front he kindled blaze after blaze, and it rushed to meet the greater blaze to burst even higher and die down. His eyes red with smoke, his clothing and face blackened from contact with charred logs and stumps of former fires; he was panting, but he only paused for a moment. The big fight was ahead. He turned back into the green timber and raced down the trail once more with strength born of his dire need.

On the crest of a small ridge he paused and looked down upon two young men and two girls. "Fire!" he cried hoarsely. "Fire!"

McArdle dropped his fishing rod; the girls paled.

"What's the best way out, Gilman?" the second man cried.

Dave Gilman's thumb jerked over his shoulder, and they came running up the slope.

"The best way out for the girls is over that ridge to the second creek and then down the creek to tidewater. They can make it if they keep their heads and their wind is good."

Gilman was blunt with his truths. He turned to McArdle. "You're going with me to fight fire! I need one man, and it was your match that started it. You lighted a cigarette down in that dry stuff."

McArdle looked at the man before him. His appearance suggested that flames had all but licked his clothing. He was black and his eyes burning—burning from the smoke and something more, determination. McArdle looked back and shook his head, and into Gilman's hand came an automatic pistol.

"You're going with me! The other young man can get the girls through to safety. I've the authority in law to arrest you, and if I didn't have, this gun is sufficient."

"Will—will we get through—alive?" McArdle found it difficult to speak. For the first time in his life he was up against the real thing.

"I don't know. That's not the question. There are others in these woods. If this thing gets away from us——" Gilman did not finish, but his gesture was eloquent.

Bill Dixon stepped forward. In his circle Bill was known as a clever talker. He could talk an exclusive society woman into inviting a roughneck to a ball. He had done so once on a bet.

"Listen, old man," he said easily, "Wayne McArdle is the greatest thing in his father's life. You're taking him into almost sure death. The old man is wealthy. What does he care for a few trees? Consider yourself. You, personally, can't afford to do this thing. If you do, you are done, on your own, even if you get through. Forget the heroics and think along practical lines.

Think of yourself! The rest of the world does! We'll back you up—to the limit."

"We sure will!" Wayne McArdle put in. The girls smiled.

There was much truth in what Dixon said. Gilman knew it. Within his breast raged a struggle. It was brief.

"Individuals don't count at a time like this. It was your match, McArdle. I'm ordering you to come on."

"I won't go! That's flat!"

Gilman slipped the safety off his automatic pistol. One of the girls screamed, and Bill Dixon stepped back. "Come on!" the ranger snapped out. "The others clear out; you haven't any too much time. Our escape does not lie this way; we're going through fire!" There was another delay. Elsa refused to go and leave Wayne with the fire fighter.

But Wayne McArdle knew that the old man meant every word he said. He insisted that Elsa go with the rest, that she would only be in the way if she remained. Then found himself trotting down the trail with Gilman at his heels.

The smoke thickened, like a curtain let down from above to hide the destruction of the temple from human eyes. When they plunged through it, young McArdle coughed, and his eyes pleaded for release.

"Hurry!" Gilman spoke hoarsely. "There's a logging camp with fifty men that might be cut off. And this timber—the finest in the world."

"The timber and the camp be darned! Telephone——"

"The wires are down. Look there!"

Flames were roaring about a trestle. In the center the rails were red hot and twisting from the heat.

"We'll let that stretch go. It won't go beyond the ridge, but over there! You see that point?"

Wayne nodded. "An old trail skirts that place!"

"Yep! It's our way out, but first we've got to back fire. We'll put ourselves between two fires; we'll be in a great nutcracker, and the flames will be pressing down on the handles, but if we work fast, there's a chance to get through. I'll start over there, and you begin up there. Work toward the point."

McArdle nodded again. Gilman read his thoughts as easily as though he had expressed them.

"And don't try to run, or I'll let you have it!"

The pair separated, and two new blazes burst from the dry stuff. The back firing had commenced. Gilman looked toward the distant point. Flames from the main blazes were roaring through a draw, turning a small creek into steam, moving as fast as a man could walk. He shrugged his shoulders. McArdle had not attempted to run, yet.

Bill Dixon dragged the girl Elsa along behind him. She was sobbing from the cruelty of the pace, but the red threat lashed her onward. Marion, the other girl, was in better condition. She liked parties and late hours, but she liked sleep and hiking better. Her condition was carrying her through. She caught Elsa's other arm and the three found themselves on a trail. A ranger's cabin was just ahead.

"I'll see if there's a telephone!" Bill said. "We've got to do something for Wayne."

He rang McArdle's summer home, four long and two short, and a voice, far away, answered. The line had grounded somewhere.

"I want McArdle!" he shouted.

"McArdle speaking!"

"Bill Dixon. Fire in that slashing below the green timber. Wayne dropped a match, I guess. Anyway, Gilman, the ranger, is after it; took Wayne with him at the point of a gun. We're at number five station. We'll work our way down the creek to tide water."

A groan came over the wire. "Taking my boy, eh!" It was the snarl of a big man. "Taken him into that——"

The wire snapped and Bill Dixon replaced the receiver. Elsa was still crying a little and smoke had settled about the cabin until the trees stood out in ghostly silence. Bill took the girl's hand and fled down the hill and into the second creek. "You go ahead, Marion; Elsa next, and I'll follow and boost you over the log jams. Keep to the stream, the going is easier, if wetter!"

Elsa forgot to shiver as she dropped from a log into icy water waist deep. Two minutes later Bill Dixon boosted her through a tangle of rotting vegetation. A devil's club ripped her clothing, even tore the flesh, but she ignored it. Within her something was taking place—perhaps the blood of some pioneer ancestor coming to the fore in the crisis. Perhaps, after all, there isn't so much to worry about over the modern generation and the modern pace. She did envy Marion's superb condition, and within her came a resolve to gain such a body for her own. A shower of living coals came from above and died, hissing, in the creek. Brush was crackling near by. She lingered long enough to scoop water onto it with her hands. There was no telling, this blaze might go on from a little thing and cut some other poor unfortunate off.

And Wayne McArdle? She remembered distinctly that it was Wayne who lighted the cigarette near the slashing. Of course she would never tell. She even felt differently toward old man McArdle. The logger had shown open preference for Marion, but love rarely considered preferences on the part of third parties and who had become engaged. She understood, now. As in everything, McArdle was making the best of it. Would this creek never end? How far was tidewater, anyway. Ten rods or ten miles? She was tired, but so were the others, and, "Poor Wayne!" Tears came again, but this time not for herself.

Sparks and sometimes living flames burned into Gilman's clothing as he started his fires. The jaws of the flaming nutcracker were almost closed. He caught glimpses of Wayne McArdle from time to time out of the corner of his eye. Suddenly he straightened up.

"All right!" he bellowed. "We've done all we can! Leg it for the point!"

Flames were at his heels, flames of his own kindling, when Gilman started. He swerved, ran lightly over a down log, and leaped. The log below gave way; he pitched forward, and something snapped. Blinding lights danced before his eyes, and there was a moment when consciousness left him. Then he opened his eyes and Wayne was standing above him. His clothing was actually smoking in one place, and his hair and eyebrows were singed. He tried to speak, but coughed instead.

"Beat it, Wayne! I'm done; broken leg! We've done all we can. Now run! Here, take this pistol, and if the flames do corner you, you know what to do. Sorry I got you into this! It's not in vain, lad! Run, I've got another gun, and maybe—God is here, lad! Run!"

Wayne McArdle instinctively ducked his head as a tongue of flame leaped from the top of a blazing tree to another. Sparks showered. "Run! Run for your life, lad!"

The younger man, with the smoking clothing, ran!

Old Bud McArdle studied a map; then he looked at the flag flying, and knew the direction of the wind.

"The ridge is gone," he muttered, "unless—Wayne and old Gilman. No! Not a chance!"

He caught a horse in a small pasture where pack animals rested between trips and galloped along the beach, mile after mile. A forestry plane roared overhead,

its radio signaling instructions to rangers.

"Just a match, a little match!" McArdle muttered to himself.

Flames and smoke sweeping up the slope blotted out the timber that had stood untouched so many generations. Just how deep into the green fir the flames had penetrated, there was no telling. It was the end of the world for some creatures, and there were two men in the inferno somewhere. Perhaps another man and two girls. The horse wanted a drink, but the man waited until he had cooled slightly, then on to the next creek. A number had gathered and were watching the flames from a different angle.

"The big stuff is saved!" some one shouted. "She's dying down. A back fire——"

The rest was lost. All eyes turned to McArdle. Other ears had caught Bill Dixon's message. Gilman had driven all that McArdle held dear, to a terrible death. His rage would be terrible, except that Gilman was beyond reach of that rage. Instinctively they stood back. McArdle was a logger of the old school, when men fought with their fists, and he never allowed himself to get out of condition. He could whip his own son if he wanted to.

Three figures were moving slowly up the beach. The group hurried forward and noted the torn clothing and scratched faces and arms of the two girls and man. They were almost hysterical from their experience. The girl, Elsa, spoke thickly, the sweet quality of her voice gone for the moment.

"We stopped three times to put out fires—it might help some!" she said.

McArdle nodded. He did not like Elsa.

"Any word of Wayne?" she managed to ask.

He did not answer, but his jaws set, and he shook his head.

A man shouted and pointed at something in human form standing on the ridge. The figure tumbled into the arms of those who reached him first, and Elsa cried: "Wayne!" He was muttering at the flames, and his arm was blistered from wrist to elbow.

Bud McArdle looked curiously at his son; his jaws were set, his face hard.

"You did that!" he rasped out. "You and your matches! I've forgiven much, but you are a logger, raised in the timber, and yet you disobeyed the written and unwritten law; you dropped a burning match."

Then: "Where's Gilman? Where's Old Dan?"

Wayne McArdle muttered and pointed toward the flames. "Just over the ridge."

Then Wayne started unsteadily up the slope. Several men seemed to understand, and they raced on ahead of him, broke through to a trail, and ran at top speed. Wayne McArdle collapsed, and Elsa held him close in her arms as if fearing something would take the man from her. She caught his weak words and hugged him closer.

"This day," she whispered, "we were tempered by flame! We are finer, Wayne, dear!"

On top of the ridge McArdle met four men carrying Dan Gilman. "Dan!" he shouted. "Are you alive?"

"Yes, thanks to the lad."

His words were almost the same as Elsa's. Perhaps it was the reaction to the flames. "We went into the melting pot together, because it was his fault the flame started. I drove him into it at the point of the pistol, but in the test something changed him. I broke my leg and told him to go and save himself, and he ran and I thought it was in vain, but it was to extinguish his clothes in a creek. Then he wet me and threw me over his shoulder and raced through living fire, and I could feel his arm wince as the flames licked away his sleeve and seared the flesh. It's long that I've known your heart, Bud, and the weight it carried.

You and the lad have been traveling different trails, but from now on you go ahead together. Go take the lad in your arms, and he'll understand."

Dan Gilman looked up at one of his own signs. "No Smoking! There is a greater penalty than the law! Go take the lad in your arms," he repeated.

Bud McArdle shook his head. "I can't right now, he's in somebody else's arms. I'll—just have to wait my turn."

## THE LIFE OF A TRAPPER

WALTER BAIKIA, a trapper of furs in Labrador, now twenty-eight years old, who has followed wild animals since he was fourteen, recently told of the life of the men who brave the bleak and trackless wilds of the North in search of animal pelts for city women to wear.

'Generally we leave Rigolet on the 25th of September," he says. "We go by water in canoes and motor boats up Hamilton Inlet to Lake Melville, then up the Nasakaupi River to where it is joined by the Northwest River, up which we proceed, each man turning here to his own particular hunting ground. Year after year, a man keeps the same place, and his right to it is unquestioned by the others. It is the unwritten code of the Northland. Far up the Northwest River, some two hundred miles from Rigolet, I have my main camp.

"When I arrive I cache my winter supplies. If you don't, roving bands of Indians and Eskimos are apt to steal them, which might mean starvation. Then I set out on my trap lines. For twenty-seven miles on the river front, fourteen one way and thirteen the other, I put out one hundred and six fox traps, as it is along the river that one is most apt to find foxes. Then I go thirty miles north of the river, setting out two hundred and fifty traps. Then fifteen miles to the south of the river, where I place one hundred and fifty traps. This makes seventy-two miles of traps which I must cover. Now begins my regular winter routine work.

"Usually by the middle of October the ground is covered with snow. I make the rounds of the river traps. This takes five days. Then I cover the ground to the north of the river, taking four days. The trip to the south occupies two days, making eleven days in all necessary for a round of all the traps. The evenings are spent in skinning and pegging out the day's take.

"'In January we usually come in for supplies to Rigolet and to bring in the fur already taken. The final return to Rigolet is made April 15. The traps must be covered in all kinds of weather. Loneliness is the greatest handicap. For seven months one hardly sees another human being.

"The average earnings of a season is one thousand dollars. This means I have to work with the fishing schooners in the summers, as the cost of supplies is so high. But I like this life. No man is my boss. Some day, I suppose, I will pass out. But that doesn't bother the trapper of the North."

W2E

# Roped from Folly

By

## George Gilbert

*Author of "Queen of the Grulla Horse Band," etc.*

### CHAPTER I.

YARDLOW PLANS.

RIDING his lean, easy-stepping roan, Blaze, Ora Yardlow swung down the grade into Harrison's Bend that occupied an elbow on the first bench above the Antelope Creek. This elbow gave room for a collection of sprawling tin-front stores, a few houses, and some places of rough-and-ready amusement. Trails crossed there; it was a point where men could stop and get the news, and buy needed articles.

The horse was a fine one. His feet were drawn up and set down springily, his tail switched from side to side or up and down with almost every step. The saddle and bridle were plain, good, dependable. Only on the tapaderos had the liking of the man for display found an outlet. They were hand tooled, with silvern traceries worked into the leather by some master hand. The horse moved quietly. The saddle leather was soft and pliable from good care—kept so without stint of labor or harness dressing. The bridle was guiltless of jingling things. The spurs were blunt, and lacked rowels. The horse's face had a white diamond between the eyes, hence his name—Blaze.

The man himself was handsome. Of a bit over medium height, he was supple, riding lightly, with perfect accord between his swaying motion and the movements of the horse. His rein he held lightly as a thistledown. His clothing was quiet in tone—but good. Tan shirt, tan trousers, thrust into well-made black, high-topped boots, a splendid gray sombrero with Chihuahua crown, but minus bells on the rim, gray gauntlet gloves—these made up a costume in good taste. A single gun, on the left side, with the butt to the front, reposed in a substantial belt that was unornamented, but filled to the last hole with .45's.

The man's face was smooth, except for a fine, well-pointed blond mustache, waxed to a pointed end on either side. His lips, seen under the mustache, were full and bowed. His head was well modeled; his eyes expressive and of a peculiar dark blue that was all but black. His chin indicated determination. His ears were finely formed and close-set to his head. The nose, hawklike, bold in outline—was the sole jarring note. Yet it was such a nose as those who seize

high command by ruthlessness often have.

As he guided his horse along the street, he became aware that he was being watched closely by a man who stood leaning against the hitch rail before a store. The man was standing with his hand on the neck of a tired, dust-covered gray horse. This second man was quite bow-legged. His face was somewhat broad, much puckered about the eyes from long days spent in the open, where wind and sun work their will. The man was homely, and his ornamented saddlery was at variance with that of the sure-moving, handsome man whom he was watching. The man's guns alone were sobering to look upon—not a glint of plating on them. They had seen use—much use.

For a full moment Ora Yardlow held his horse still while he returned, look for look, the intent glances of the other man. Neither spoke. Then Yardlow clucked to Blaze and rode on.

The bow-legged, homely man fished the makin's out of his left-hand pocket and rolled one, lighting it with gusto.

"Bah! Pepper, he's too good lookin' t' be true," he told his tied horse.

"Waugh!" Pepper sighed. Then he eased up his off hip and let the nigh hip sag down.

The homely man went into the place of refreshment with much jingle of spur and a bit of swagger of broad shoulders.

Up the street the handsome man turned in his saddle to see the ill-favored one disappear within doors. Then his lip lifted in a wolf snarl that gave, for a barest flash, a look of deviltry to his handsome countenance. He, too, swung down and entered an open door, leaving the sun-smitten street deserted and still.

The place Ora Yardlow had entered was the public room of the "Lluvia del Argent," the Shower of Silver. It was the town's most pretentious place of resort.

A half dozen games of chance were in operation, but without much excitement. It was the dull hour of the Bend's day. Yardlow crooked a lean forefinger at Billson, the keeper of the place, who got up from a table and went with the handsome man around the end of the bar to a little rear room. Yardlow motioned for the man to sit down, and he sat down opposite him. A soft-footed Mexican came with drinks at a word from Billson.

"Who is that homely, slab-sided geezer that's lounging up the street?" Yardlow asked.

"Stranger. Been in town 'bout an hour. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. I have hunches, you know. He eyed me pretty saucy as I rode in. Well, if he stays in town, have him watched."

"All ri', sure, Yardlow." This assent was given with an air that showed he paid the deepest respect to the handsome man.

"And now, I want something else, Billson," said the other, leaning forward to tap Billson's chest with that lean forefinger. "And I want this got straight by you an' all the Bend bunch. I'm going t' be married——" He paused in his talk to watch the other's face.

"Sure; congrats. I suppose they're in order?" Billson asked, grinning.

"You know it, Billson. Mighty nice woman. Not old, handsome, lots of money. I met her in Omaha when I was East with that load of beeves last fall. We've been corresponding. I pressed my suit pretty hard when I was in Omaha that week. Got a half promise out of her. But she had to wait till she had her brother married off. They'd lived together since their father died and left them a wad o' money. Her brother didn't cotton t' me. So she won't be married in Omaha. Instead, she's coming here an' the weddin's t' be here. Sabe? Her name's Clarice Golden. About twenty-one, blonde, too."

He screwed up one eye quizzically. Billson nodded.

"Now what I want t' be sure o' is this," he said emphatically. "She will be in on the stage to-morrow. She'll come by train to Rawson; I'll ride down with her. Of course she'll be in town all day, or until I can get the Reverend Amos Barnes up from Pocatel t' tie the knot. I'll see that no one gets a chance t' talk t' her on the stage, but I'll have t' leave her alone in town here while I make arrangements."

"Goin' t' marry her, sure off?" Billson asked.

"You bet, as that gives me the holt on her money."

Billson laughed. "And I suppose if she didn't have any, you'd treat her as you treated Anne Wilston——"

Yardlow's eyes darkened; his lip lifted in his wolf snarl. Billson spluttered.

"No, Yardlow; I didn't mean any offense. You know we've joked about those wives you've had and——"

"Don't dig up that. That's what I want stopped. I don't want you or any other man in this burg t' breathe anything but good about me till after we're married. Once I get her and have her out to the Circle Double A—well, she won't go away again. No woman ever did." He banged the table till the glasses rang together in their dance.

"Well, I'll take care o' every one I can reach, and I can reach a few," Billson said.

"And when I get that money of hers t' spend, I'll be here, plenty and often, Billson."

He got up, loosened his gun in its holster, and stepped swingingly out of the room, around the end of the bar and thence to the street. All the habitués of the place watched him as he went out. As the door closed a buzz of remarks followed. Billson, coming out to join them, sat down, and they waited for him to speak, for they sensed that he had been told something that was news to the town.

"What d' you think, boys?"

"Well, spill it," a thin, bearded man urged.

"Hamer, it's like this: Yardlow's goin' to be married again."

"Works some rapid," Hamer put in.

"Six months after his third died, too," a red-faced, short man, Sid Allen, remarked.

"Yes; and she was glad t' go, after the way he treated her," Billson said. "But that's not in our pot. Now, his gal will be in on the stage to-morrow, an' he wants nothing said about him, except what'll count for his good, till after they're married. He's goin' t' have the minister from Pocatel—Reverend Barnes—to tie the knot. She'll be in town a few hours before that. He'll likely keep pretty close t' her, but he doesn't want any fox passes made. Get that? He says that any man that butts into his game will get shot up pretty darned pronto. You-all know that he don't waste any threats that a way."

"No, he doesn't, any a-tall," Hamer agreed, and the others nodded.

The sinister reputation of the handsome man was apparent as they discussed what might happen to a man who crossed him in his present mood.

"He's goin' t' spread the news all up an' down the street," Billson told them. "He's got a mo'gage on half the joints in town, and him and his punchers will make good on anything he starts. That woman's goin' t' hear a lot o' praises of her hubby-t'-be, an' don't you forget it. An' when he cashes in on some of her coin—he's goin' to blow the whole works on the bunch in here."

Smacking of lips told of their anticipations of pleasure at this news.

In other places Yardlow left the same word, getting this one to promise to do as he wished from fear, getting that one to agree to his plan from self-interest.

Two or three times he passed the homely, bow-legged puncher, who was drifting about town.

Each time they passed they exchanged curious stares. They were so much opposed to each other in looks that they seemed to have an antipathy toward each other, but Yardlow had plans for the morrow that forbade his picking a quarrel, and the other man was seemingly inclined toward peace.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BOW-LEGGED MAN.

WHOW an' wow-eeee!"

The bow-legged man, ambling out of a store up the street, gave vent to his feelings. He forked the dusty gray cayuse and it rocked down the street toward the Shower of Silver. He slid off the steed sedately and ambled into the place. His homely face was alight with yearning for man talk. Riding for a job had taken him away from folks he knew. He wanted to belong, to be friendly. Since Yardlow had been in town the atmosphere had grown more and more chilly, for at each place the handsome man had visited he had told of his dislike for the bow-legged visitor.

Mr. Bowlegs now advanced to the bar and asked for a mild drink. His request was unheeded. Billson kept his back turned. The bow-legged one stared about with a growing comprehension, then began to sway a bit and yowled a few times. He presently staggered toward a chair and slumped down, laying his head on his folded arms. Then he snored in steady rhythm.

"I'd run him out for a two bits," Billson said, "but let him snooze, if he wants to. Yardlow don't admire him none. He ain't goin' t' get encouraged any in this man's town."

The snorer snored on and on and on. The little game got under way. The snoring made a fine background for a low-voiced talk. The group discussed Yardlow's coming marriage. And the men discussed Yardlow's former marriages and escapades. Three women had paid the penalty of their folly in marrying the man. He had broken the hearts of a half dozen other young women of the region. He had been in a score of gun fights over women and had emerged scatheless from all such experiences. He had prospered materially. He had slain men for opposing his schemes. The tellers of the tales laughed and joked coarsely over them. They were all admirers of Yardlow and voiced the wish that they might have his luck. As they talked, they forgot the snorer and when he ceased snoring they went right on with their gossip, talking ever louder.

"And now he's got another poor fish on his string. Yardlow's an open-face stem winder," Billson wound up with.

"How 'bout the gal?" Hamer asked.

"Accordin' t' his tell, she's a right smart bit o' calico. Money, beauty—everything nice."

"Leave that all to Yardlow," Sid Allen commented.

"An' he'll break her, as he's broke the others. He'll have her money and she'll be shipped out, heart busted all to flinders, or she'll be in his private wife burying ground up on his ranch," Billson wound up with. "He's boasted t' me that he only intends to marry her t' get hold of what she's got an' have another good time drinkin' and gamblin'."

A chair fell over with a bang. They started. They had forgotten the bow-legged man. He was now erect, his hat on the back of his head, his chair on its back on the floor behind him. He was leaning on the table at which he had been sitting, his finger tips on the table, supporting his weight lightly.

"What'n the devil's up?" Billson jerked out.

The bow-legged one stared hard at them all and then he spoke.

"I'm sorry for that girl. I sure am."

"What's it t' you?" Hamer cut in with.

"Oh, I suppose nothing, hombre, but I've said my say. Any remarks?"

Billson, opposite him, was behind the table. His right shoulder lifted—the veriest trifle. By some magic two guns leaped up in the hands of the bow-legged man. His voice took on a grating quality.

"Keep your hand away from that gun, Whisky Seller. I said my say. I'm sure sorry for that girl. Any remarks?"

There were none. Their eyes fell away from before the threat in the depths of those wide-set gray eyes.

"If not, we declare the meetin' adjourned and the minutes thereof approved. They are approved, as read," and he jerked the guns down, out of sight. Then he strode out. Halfway to the door he wheeled, and half a dozen hands jerked back from weapons their owners dared not touch.

Then he was outside.

They heard him mount and ride slowly away. Billson went to the door and peered out.

"He's makin' out o' this man's town; I guess he's found out it's pretty chilly in the Bend," he announced.

"Well, he c'n go; any man that can unlimber his smoke carts that a way can have my side o' the street, any day, any time," Hamer said grudgingly.

## CHAPTER III.

### PEPPER DECIDES MATTERS.

ALTHOUGH evidently tired, the ewe-necked, lanky cayuse of the homely man made surprisingly good time as he swung around the *rincón* and made into the straight of the trail. The *bajara* of an arroyo cut through higher ground to the west and made into the trail a ways ahead. The tired cayuse was picking his way through this rather gingerly, for his rider had asked him to cut across it, instead of working around it where the trail was smoother. So doing he was saving distance, if not time.

Now, from behind, came the rising rhythm of hoofbeats. The roan of the handsome man came into view, and he took the round of the *bajara*. So the two met on the far side of the stony spot—met fairly, the handsome man rounding to from the southeast; the homely man going straight north.

The homely man seemed about to let the other pass without a word, but finally he sang out:

"Howdy; how far's the Circle Double A?"

"Five miles—but don't stop there," said the handsome one shortly.

"Oh, who're you?" inquired the other, reining in his steed, as the other man did the same with his. Now their horses were ranged across the trail, the head of one pointed as was the tail of the other. So the right hands of the two men were to be seen by each.

"My name is Yardlow," said the handsome man menacingly.

"That don't mean nothin' to me; my name is Joyce; Bud Joyce."

"I heard of you in town. You're ridin' for a job. Well, there's none at Circle Double A for you."

"You the Big Auger there?" asked Joyce quietly.

"I own the Circle Double A," came back the other with an air of keen satisfaction.

"That bein' the case, I wouldn't work there, not any. I heard in town they wanted a hand there, but I didn't ask who owned it, on'y who the primero is. Now that I know who owns it, I wouldn't work there, none at all."

The other's laugh was very brittle and hostile.

"Sour grapes, eh?"

"No, but though I'm not a saint, lemme tell you a few. I heard those geezers in the Lluvia del Argent talkin' about you an' your plan t' marry again. I heard all about you. I'm sayin' now that I'm mighty sorry for any woman that'd marry you, Yardlow. And that

goes as it lays—now, don't start what you cain't finish."

Yardlow's hand snapped back from his gun butt as the gun of the other leaped into line. The homely man's face was still serene. Only his eyes had a glow in their depths now.

"Yardlow," he said, "get a-goin' and keep a-goin' mighty short an' pronto. Fade, now."

The handsome man's hand twitched; he seemed on the point of forcing an issue already lost. But his arm quieted; he twitched his horse about and started him up the trail. Joyce watched him ride away, then he holstered his gun with a lightninglike jerk of the wrist and spoke to the sober cayuse.

"We'll get into trouble yet, Pepper. What do we mean hornin' in like this? We'll go off side the trail, find a likely spot with some grass, an' a way for me t' get you down t' the creek t' drink. We'll camp out t'-night an' ramble in the a. m. Dog-gone your hide, you'd like t' have me get into trouble about that girl we've neither of us ever seen and ain't a-goin' to see. Make a slide, now, down-grade, toward the creek."

Which Pepper, with bunched feet, proceeded to do.

Below, Joyce found the likely spot, the grass and the good place to water his horse. Then he side lined Pepper and began to get his own meal.

Pepper watched the preparations from afar, stopping in his nipping of grass from time to time to do so. Joyce addressed him during these halts in grass nipping to make remarks like this:

"Dog-goned ol' pie eater! Mind your own bus'ness, like I'm a-goin' t' do. Don't watch me; you ain't goin' t' get any pie." And then he inspected the contents of his fast-slimming war bag, days ago so full and round.

He got out his last flour, a little in the corner of a small sack. He cut up the last of his bacon, laying the slices out on a flat stone. He got out a wisp of paper in which was twisted up his last baking powder. Another wisp held his sugar, and another his pepper and salt, mixed. And another still held his only ounce of coffee.

Putting the flour into the frying pan, Joyce stirred it cautiously till it was the right consistency, working in a dab of lard, almost turned by the heat to oil, that he had in a small can, with a friction-top cover. He got the flour and lard into a crumbly mass, then sifted in the baking powder and a bit of salt. When he had it to a soft, doughlike mass, he began to make his little fire, laying the sticks wheel wise. Now and then Pepper whickered, and then Joyce admonished him anew.

"Darned old pie eater; you're out o' this."

He had the little fire going now, clear and straight burning. He held the frying pan over it until the dough had baked a little on the bottom and around the sides of the pan, so that the dough would stay in the pan when the pan was turned up on edge. Now he turned it up so before the fire, propping it with stones deftly laid up behind it. He watched it with solicitude as the heat struck it full in front and it began to rise and swell. Soon it was cracking and then, after the right interval of time, it was done, the good old frying pan bread of the outlands. Joyce smacked his lips. Pepper nickered, but Joyce paid no attention now. He took the frying pan off the fire, dusted a stone clean with his hat, and cut the bread out of the pan with his knife, turning the bread out onto the stone.

The puncher put the bacon into the pan and held it far enough over the fire to draw out some of the grease to fry with, before letting the full heat strike through the iron of the pan. Then he let the bacon fry. The bread was cooling as the bacon cooked.

Pepper nickered again, but Joyce paid no attention. The bacon done, he

dumped it out, atop the round of bread, poured the bacon gravy over the bread and meat, and then filled the pan with water from the creek. He set the pan over a corner of the fire, put in the coffee, and left it to draw, putting his cup on a stone, to have it handy. He dumped his last sugar into the cup; then he cut a forked twig, sharpened the forks daintily, and had something with which to spear the bacon strips.

Joyce watched the coffee steam as he cut the bread. One of the slices and a bit of bacon he laid aside, after he had slit the bread and inserted the bacon in the slit. He now proceeded to fork up slices of crisp bacon and eat them, chewing the bread with great gusto. The meal was good—especially to eat in that out-of-door setting.

The sun had gone; the dusk came, velvet-cool. Joyce poured a bit of cold water into the coffee in the frying pan to settle the coffee. Then he poured the coffee into his tin cup and drank it with deepest enjoyment. He scoured out the frying pan with a wisp of clean grass, then with sand, then rinsed it with water and set it on the embers to dry off. He did the same for his cup, threw away his wooden, handmade fork, and wiped his knife on the grass and shoved it back into its sheath. With one dish to cook in and his knife as his only tool, he had made a good meal, clean, nourishing. He was content. He called Pepper to him and the cayuse, now refreshed and chipper, came with neck outstretched.

"Here's your pie," said Joyce, giving him the sandwich of bread and bacon. The horse, tasting the salt, showed his appreciation and went away nodding his head vigorously, as a horse will when mouthing something strong in flavor—a flavor the horse likes.

"Dog-goned ol' pie face," said Joyce, "always stickin' your nose in where it's not wanted. I'll bet if you had your way, you'd go down to Harrison's Bend an' ramble right close t' daylight an' try t' get that girl so she'd not marry that sidewinder of a Yardlow? Well, you won't have the say; I'm boss o' this outfit. I'll put away a li'le of this bread for a mornin' snack and drink the creek dry and then call it a day."

He rolled up in his blankets and soon was asleep.

The stars hung out their lamps over the lone puncher. A cactus owl somewhere complained. A coyote told his woes to the sickle of the moon that peered, silvern and mystic, over the rim of the world.

The stars paled; rosy dawn touched the sky line, Pepper came clumping along to nose at Joyce's blankets.

"Dog-goned old pie face, why'n't you mind your own bus'ness an' fill your belly with grass. You'll need it before I get up t' Rawson, where we're goin' t' be at noon, so I c'n get some more grub an' ramble on. That's where we're goin'. I've got some bread left an' the creek's full of water. We'll beat it right north, away from the Bend. Let that girl take care of herse'f."

Joyce ate, smoked, saddled, and rode up the slope to the trail. On the trail he let the reins go slack and rolled another. He sat smoking, leg around the horn. Pepper looked around, nickered.

"Tha's right, buttin' in where you've got no bus'ness. You'd go right down t' the Bend and butt into trouble, wouldn't you?"

Pepper nickered again and turned toward the north and Rawson.

"Well, all right, dog-gone you; if you want it so bad, have it," Joyce said laughingly. "Come around and you hit the high spots, now; show some style; roll your tail and roll it high."

And Pepper made speed, while the puncher's song floated back behind him.

Ridin' along; singin' a song;
We're comin', honey; it won't be long;
Riding along, won't be long——

Then he was out of sight, but instead of going toward Rawson, he was going toward—Harrison's Bend.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A PLOT AGAINST JOYCE.

HANDSOME Ora Yardlow, his clothing free from trail dust, his face shining from recent ablutions, his mustache waxed and scented, his gloves immaculate, stood at attention as the westbound pulled into Rawson. He spied the girl and made haste to greet her as she stood, expectant, on the rail side as the train puffed away. Two or three men who had advanced as if from curiosity, stepped back hastily as Yardlow went to the girl's side.

She was not a young slip of a girl, but a wholesome young woman. Her face glowed with happiness as she saw Yardlow. Her trunk, on the ground, she indicated with a gesture, and he laughed.

"We'll get that onto the stage all right; let it stay right there. I'll have a Mexican take care of it. Come; you must want something to eat, Clarice."

"It was a long ride, and I was lonesome," she admitted, as he began to escort her toward the center of the small town.

"I'll bet you were; we'll have a nice ride down to the Bend, and then back to my place on horseback. I've got a nice pinto pony gentled for you."

"Oh, have you?" she cried, clapping her hands. "I ride quite well, that is, for a city girl," she amended.

"Yes; we're goin' to make you happy. You'll be boss of the Circle Double A."

He was like a cavalier in his attentions to her. He waited upon her assiduously as she went to eat and chatted gayly, keeping her attention fully engaged until stage time. They had the inside to themselves on the ride down. Yardlow, agreeable when he elected so to be, kept the girl's eyes glowing and dancing as he talked of himself and his ranch and the life she was to lead. He pictured the ranch house as filled with all modern conveniences, the men under him as ideals of border chivalry. Her romantic ideas were fed to the uttermost by the adroit schemer.

A little past noon the stage rolled into Harrison's Bend. The two alighted. Yardlow glanced about. The men in sight kept aloof, as he had instructed.

He began to escort the girl down the street toward the home of Hamer, where he had arranged to have her kept occupied by Mrs. Hamer, the cowed and weak helpmate of the henchman of Billson, until he could make certain needful arrangements for the wedding. He learned that the minister was not in town as yet, a man stopping him to say that the Reverend Barnes had been detained because of a funeral in Pocatel and would be in in the evening.

The girl was left with Mrs. Hamer.

"So you're goin' t' be married t' Yardlow?" Mrs. Hamer asked, furtively attentive to the beauty of this new, strange woman.

"Yes; I'm so happy. Ora stands well here, doesn't he?" Clarice asked, with just a touch of anxiety in the query.

"Well! Why, he's the finest man in all the region. No man is nicer than Ora Yardlow."

"I think so, but I'm glad to have one of his neighbors praise him; it sounds so nice."

A few moments later Clarice Golden was sitting quietly and happily in the Hamer parlor, listening to the thin stream of talk poured forth by Mrs. Hamer, who sounded Yardlow's praises without ceasing. The promise of a new dress from Yardlow had been sufficient to buy her praises. The girl, in a mist of romantic dreams, easily persuaded herself that all the woman said was more than true.

On the street, his mind easy as to the whereabouts of the girl, Yardlow

breathed freer. He had feared that some one, in Rawson or on the trip down, would say something to her. Now he had forestalled all possibility of that. He would marry her and take her to his ranch. Once there she would do as the other three had done, as long as they had kept up under his harsh rule.

He was feeling very well satisfied then as he started across the street toward the Lluvia del Argent.

Before the door was Joyce, his lips set to a white line.

Yardlow, gazing straight before him, had to step around the homely, bow-legged puncher, who turned about so that he faced the other till he had gone behind the swinging doors. Then Joyce walked to the hitch rail and mounted Pepper, riding slowly up the street.

Inside, Yardlow jerked his thumb over his shoulder and spoke to Billson, who got up to greet him.

"That hard-faced puncher's back in town, I see. I want him done for. He's a trouble maker. Come on, Hamer and Allen—le's talk it over. I want a clean job on this, and there'll be no inquests after, either."

Together the four men went into the little back room.

Joyce rode up past the Hamer house, turned, and came back; then he rode past again. After that he rode to the edge of town, saying to Pepper hoss:

"Well, it's none o' our funeral, Pepper, dog-goned poke nose, you. Shake a laig——"

Which Pepper did till he reached the town's edge. Then, feeling the slack rein and sensing the slacker pose of the rider afork him, he turned about and started back toward the town's center.

"All right, you'll get into a jack pot if you keep on this a way," Joyce objected. "But I've a notion t' see the girl, anyway. I wonder if she'd lis'en to a bunch of truth about that ornery, low-flung sidewinder of a Yardlow?"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GIRL LISTENS TO YARDLOW.

YARDLOW came to the Hamer house from time to time to give Clarice news of the progress of their affairs, and to see that the young woman was not being approached by any one unauthorized so to do. He informed her that Barnes was further delayed by an accident to his horse. A mail rider, in from Pocatel, had reported the minister lamed and shaken up from the fall of his horse off the edge of a cut-bank on the trail, laid up in a ranch house fifteen miles below the Bend. He would be in the Bend in the morning, early.

"You'll stay right here with Ma Hamer," Yardlow said. "She'll give you a nice shake-down bed. We're a li'le mite rough out here on the range, but that will all pass in time as the country settles up. Did you bring that paper I wrote you about?"

"Yes," she said happily, oblivious to his intent—not seeing the glint in his eyes as she produced from her bodice a folded paper. He opened it and read its contents eagerly. It was a power-of-attorney, making him manager of her affairs, after their marriage.

"You can have it now if you want t' keep it," she said.

"Oh, no," he said, giving it back. "Not until we're married," and she took this as proof of his goodness of heart, although the paper was not valid, by its terms, until after the marriage had been solemnized. He had seen this upon reading it and, with the appearance of disinterestedness, had given it over into her keeping again.

He went away, telling her he would be back to eat the evening meal with her. He got her consent to eat the little wedding banquet he had arranged for in one of the town's hotels.

"We can have the celebration before the wedding," he urged. "And not wait till after. I've got my friends all in

town for it, and they can't wait, some of them, till to-morrow. A li'le meal, some dancing, and fun, say?"

"That will be jolly. We'll celebrate beforehand our happiness to come."

"You're sure one good sport, Clarice," he whispered, stealing a kiss. He left her with her heart fairly bounding with hope and love for this man who had wooed her so tempestuously in Omaha that she had had hardly time to weigh her real feeling for him. He had swept her along on a torrent of pretty phrases that he had shrewdly calculated would leave her no opportunity to analyze her true state of mind till it was too late for her to turn back. His alternate moods of warmth and seeming carelessness toward her were shrewdly calculated by Yardlow to lure the girl along the primrose path he had set her feet upon. The naturally good heart of the girl made her unsuspecting. Sheltered and guarded, she had little idea of the wickedness of humanity as represented by the adventurer and the men of easy conquest. To her the accents of her lover's voice were genuine and true—probably because they were so soft on the ear.

It was now dark. The girl went outside, for she was restless and wished to look upon the town, even if it were from afar. She had hastened through it upon her arrival and had but a confused idea of it, as she had watched her lover more than she had watched the town as she had passed through it.

She strolled to the street line and sat down on a stone that Hamer had placed there as a stepping-stone for mounting to ride. She folded her hands and gazed down toward where the lights gleamed and figures passed to and fro across the rambling street.

The stars were soft and kindly above: the girl sighed happily.

"My romance is coming true; he is big and handsome and it is all just as he said when he courted me in Omaha. I'm going to be happy, indeed!"

There was a clatter of hoofs down the street and a man rode toward her.

The girl was not afraid as the man approached. She was before the house of the Hamers, and people were within call. She watched him dismount without thinking much of it. She noted his extreme bow-leggedness with some amusement as his limbs cut off the light from a store below. She noted how his hat came off respectfully as he faced her, and how the horse followed him, stood with his nose at the man's shoulder. She could not see the man's face, for his back was toward the distant lights. His voice, low, soft, came to her.

"Evenin', ma'am, and excuse me, ma'am, for speaking without being known t' you."

"Good evening," she returned, her voice displaying no shade of interest. "Can I assist you? Do you wish to make any inquiry as to direction or people here? I'm only a newcomer, but I may be able to tell you, or find out anything you want by asking Mrs. Hamer, in the house."

"No; I want t' speak with you personal, ma'am."

"With me? I don't know you, though," she answered, making her shoulders firm.

"No, ma'am, but perhaps you ought t'. You're goin' t' marry Yardlow?"

"Why—yes—what's that mean to you, sir?" She felt herself suddenly growing angry.

"Why, just this, ma'am. I'm just a fool puncher, and he's a big-wig rancher. But he's not fitten t' marry a good woman."

"I won't listen to any talk like this, sir," she said, getting up decisively. "You are a stranger, and he is my intended husband."

"Which is no news t' me, ma'am," said Joyce with irritating persistence.

"I suppose he's some enemy of yours? Perhaps you once worked for him and

he discharged you? Or you asked him for a job and he refused you?"

"He never had the chanct t' fire me, ma'am," said Joyce, twisting his broad-brimmed hat about in his nervous fingers. "An' when I was asking for a job on his Circle Double A, I didn't know he was the owner of it, an' when he said who he was I told him I didn't want in with him, no way a-tall."

"Then you did want a job on his ranch?" Clarice asked triumphantly. "There's more to this than you are letting on. I don't know you, and don't want to." She turned shortly and was starting away.

The man dropped the reins of his horse and had her by one wrist in a few quick strides. His voice quivered with intensity.

"You're acting like a chucklehaid. Yardlow's a devil. He's broke a dozen women's hearts an' he'll break yours if you go with him."

"What is that to you?" she asked, jerking her wrist free.

"Perhaps nothing. But I was brought up t' respect a good woman. I've got a mother and sister living yet, down on the Pecos. No one in this man's town will dare tell you the truth about Yardlow."

"Do you mean to tell me that Yardlow is a frontier terror, the typical bad man, able to frighten every one by his mere name and that he has lured me out here to master me and misuse me after marriage?"

"Which I been tryin' t' get through your haid for ten minutes, ma'am."

"Well, Mr. Bowlegs, you lie. You've got some petty spite to wreak on Mr. Yardlow, and I shall not hesitate to tell him of your conduct when he comes to see me in a few moments. I'd advise you to be absent then," she added proudly, and she turned and walked into the house.

Bud Joyce spoke to Pepper. "Didn't I tell you? You would butt in, ridin' back into this man's town that a way. Well, we'll ramble now, entire."

Joyce rode to the town's center again. The town was chilly toward him, but he did not want to ride that night very far. Some force he could not explain kept him within sight and sound of such revelry as the town afforded. He was not made welcome, though. He was made to feel that he did not belong. He could have had a half dozen fights, but he refused to take up covert challenges.

Once he passed the Lluvia del Argent and Billson, in the doorway, pointed him out to Hamer and Sid Allen.

"That's the man. Get that man."

The two nodded and thereafter shadowed Bud about, watching for a favorable opportunity to get him between two fires or in a corner where he could be "jumped" with safety to the jumpers.

In one place that he visited Bud Joyce heard how the wedding celebration was to take place before the ceremony, that night, and that the wedding itself would take place upon the arrival of Barnes in the morning. He got the name of the hotel, the Antelope House, where the wedding celebration was to be held. He rode past it, looking it and its environs over. Then he rode to the edge of town and prepared to make a camp for the night.

Pepper, accustomed to the ways of his master, submitted to being side lined again, and grazed about contentedly. They had made worse camps than that in a little elbow of the creek. There was water and grass. Pepper was well satisfied.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PLOT MISCARRIES.

TWO men watched, afoot, the making of Bud Joyce's lonely camp. They had thought he would make it there, as many strangers had done, for Harrison Bend often had forced strangers outside

its limits as Joyce had been forced—by chilly, cold animosity.

They watched Bud eat his cold snack, drink, and then roll in his blankets. They watched the little fire die down to embers; they watched till they could not see the blanketed hump on the ground. Then they crept in, guns out, feet soft as those of panthers.

Once the horse nickered a little, but so little that they did not think his master could have heard.

They were close enough now to see the blanketed hump again and to see a faint glimmer from the last of the fire's embers.

A stick, breaking, fell into the heated center of the bit of gray fire débris. The light, for a second, was bright close to the fire. They saw, with satisfaction, the boots projecting below the blankets, the hat above it, the hump of the blanketed figure.

Their guns flamed and they leaped inward. There was silence.

They felt of the humped figure, then they broke into nervous oaths, and then, from the outer darkness came:

"Got you covered; I c'd kill you both, pronto. Go tell Yardlow t' send men, not boys, against me next time. And tell him that as long's he's begun a direct attack on me, without reason, I'm goin' to see that he's kept busy. No man ever threw dirt onto Bud Joyce an' got away with it yet. Now, get a-goin' an' keep a-goin'."

The two men retreated promptly. Bud spoke to Pepper.

"Dog-gone old pie face, you, that li'le nicker that I trained you t' give me as a warning at night was just the trick. Always buttin' in on some one's bus'-ness, eh, ol' pie eater, you?"

Pepper then nickered—loudly and gladly—and Bud swore at him softly and affectionately as he sought his blankets anew.

Bud Joyce had the faculty possessed by the man of the Long Trails—that of being able to set his mind, like an alarm clock, that he might awaken almost to the minute, at any time of the night or day he desired, after a short slumber. Upon settling down, following the defeat of the assassins of Yardlow, he determined upon a short nap only, for he did not know but that the men would return.

He accordingly awakened in about an hour, rolled out of his blankets sidewise, stole away from the fire and listened. He could hear Pepper cropping methodically, and the tinkle of the flowing water.

That was all.

Off toward the Bend a faint glow told of lights still burning. Bud thought he could catch the faintest of fiddle notes, and he thought, with a sigh, of the dancing and feasting for her wedding celebration. He listened for a long time, but no signs of intruders were apparent. Then he clucked to Pepper, and the horse came clumping along haltingly in his hobbles and nuzzled his master.

Joyce saddled up and rode quietly toward town. As he approached the buildings, he could hear the music plainer. He drifted the horse down behind the buildings until he was at the rear of the Antelope Hotel. There was a hay shed there, a big, rambling structure, with baled hay stacked up inside and buckboards thrust under the overhang of the low roof—buckboards belonging to people at the wedding celebration. Bud tied Pepper to a nail he found driven into the corner of the shed.

Bud lounged around the corner of the shed. He could hear some one talking over at the rear door of the hotel. The door opened, and several men came out. Bud could tell that a bottle was circulating. The men exchanged jokes with each other, the subject being Yardlow and his bride. They made references to the girl and to the sureness with which they expected Yardlow, according to his custom, to swindle her and cast her

adrift, when he was ready to make another try at matrimony and wealth.

These men were all town hangers-on. A large number of shady characters made the town their stopping place between forays; there were many gamblers and illicit whisky men there. The town as a whole bore none too good a reputation, being looked upon as a haven for undesirables. So there was hardly a person in it, aside from Bud, amenable to good impulses with reference to Clarice Golden and her entanglement with Yardlow.

The more Bud thought of the situation, the more did he wish to serve Clarice. She had awakened in him all the chivalry of the long line of Westerners. He kept in mind his mother, patient, soft-voiced, inspiring passionate devotion amongst all the men who came within the sweep of the gentle influence, yet ever true to the one man—her husband. He recalled his sisters, true sisters of pioneer stock, quiet in the presence of strangers, modest always, merry at home or when attending merry-makings of the right sort. He pictured what it would mean to one of those women to be snared by a man like Yardlow.

Bud came to himself to find the gossiping rowdies gone. The lilt of the music came to him; he could see the couples drifting past the windows of the dance room of the hotel, at the rear, but over to the right, at the corner. As he watched, the moon swung over the buildings and looked down into the hotel's back yard. A few clouds scudded across it; mostly it was bright. Bud lounged along under the overhang of the shed. He could see two oblong panes shining with light from within, knew they were in a door almost at the corner—probably a door opening out of the dance room.

The door opened. A man stepped out. He gave a low whistle. A Mexican boy appeared from another shed down the yard a ways, leading a pinto horse. Bud could see the pretty horse as it passed the lighted windows. It was a well-built, clean-climbed horse, and as a passing cloud went, leaving the moon's light unobstructed, Bud was able to estimate the animal's solid qualities. The pinto was saddled and bridled.

The Mexican gave the bridle to the other man, who now spoke.

"Return *poco tiempo,* Manuel."

*"Si, señor,"* answered the other, going away quietly.

Yardlow let the reins of the pinto fall to the ground. He remained still, as Yardlow went into the dance room again. Bud was held by some power he could not then explain, to watch. Soon Yardlow opened the door and Clarice Golden passed out before him, standing for a second against the flooding light from behind her as she clasped her hands and gazed at the horse. Then she gave a cry of delight and sprang to the pinto's head and began to caress him. The horse nickered at her and permitted her caresses. It evidently was a case of love at first sight.

"Like him, eh?" Yardlow said.

"Like him? I love him! Oh, you are a dear to give him to me. And a saddle and bridle——"

"Complete outfit. There's a divided skirt in the cloak room for ladies, right under your hat and wraps. I smuggled it in, as a surprise. I thought as there is a moon, you'd like t' ride a li'le later in between a couple o' dances. We could slip out and have a ride together, our first."

"Oh, that will be wonderful. I think all your friends are fine, Ora. They are dancing me till I'll have blisters on my toes. Some of them seem rather rough and ready, but one must expect that in a new and raw country."

Yardlow chuckled and made no comment. He called for Manuel, who came presently.

"Have the hoss here in half an hour,"

Yardlow instructed the Mexican, who led the horse away. They walked together about the moonlit yard for a moment, Yardlow saying:

"I'll come out and call Manuel and see that the hoss is all right. I'll give you a signal. You'll be dancing with some o' the boys, most likely. I've let you fill your card pretty free, because I want to show we're not stuck up."

"Yes, I understand; I want to make friends, right off," she said earnestly.

"Tha's all ri', Clarice," answered Yardlow with a rough caress as he drew her toward the door again. The music was growing wilder now, and the raucous shouts and comments told of spirits rising. "Never mind the boys if they warm up a bit as time goes on; they're only tryin' to show their good feelin's toward you and me."

"I understand." Her willingness to please him made her oblivious to the real meaning of the hilarity inside. Then they were gone. Bud found himself cold with a rage that had possessed him against this deed of deviltry that was being forwarded under cover of law and custom. He had no authority to interfere, he knew, but he felt a desire to dash into the midst of the crowd and force the issue some way. He knew, however, that there was no way he could do it—in there. He would be looked upon by all, and by Clarice Golden, too, as a madman. He might overawe them all, but to what end? The guns of the men would be in the men's coat room. He could overshadow them, but it would be a cheap, tawdry, silly bit of braggadocio—not in line with Bud Joyce's traditions. And it would not serve any purpose, for the girl would marry the deceiver, after enjoying a good laugh at him, Bud, for his folly. And suffer ever after!

He thought wildly of kidnaping Barnes, but that would only make a delay of a day, for Yardlow could get another minister or have a civil marriage performed. Reverend Barnes would not know the true state of affairs, for he was a new minister and no one in the Bend would tell him of Yardlow's evil reputation and if they did, Yardlow would substitute another man of the cloth for Reverend Barnes.

Joyce kept under the shadowy overhang of the roof. Pepper was quiet where he was tied. The moon shone or disappeared, as the clouds drifted. The dance-room door opened.

Clarice Golden was framed in the open space. Bud heard her say: "Please get me an ice, Mr. Allen," and then the short man with her disappeared. She leaned out, evidently hoping for another sight of the pretty horse that had so captured her trusting heart. In a moment Bud had done something that came to him like a flash. He had crossed the intervening space and stood before her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and she drew half back. "Is it you—again?"

"Yes, ma'am; I wanted t' tell you again what I tried t' tell you up at Hamer's—if you'd on'y believe me. Ask some one—ask the minister or some one from outside in the morning, before it's too late."

"I won't listen to you, sir," she said angrily, stamping her little foot. "It is an insult to me and to my intended husband for you even to face me again. I didn't tell him of your other talk with me, for I didn't want him to get into any fights on this night of all nights. But if you don't go right away, I'll tell him, and he and his friends will have you horsewhipped out of town. I wouldn't insult Yardlow, even by inference, by inquiring as to his character. It suits me very well," she added proudly.

"As for that, I'd sure admire t' shoot it out with him—an' his character will stand some replenishin', ma'am," he returned with calm assurance.

"Yes, I've heard of you gun fighters

before. Mr. Yardlow would scorn to stoop to your level—go, now, before I call him."

"I'm going, but not because I'm afraid t' meet him; ask him who met him the other day and made him swallow wind, miss." He drew back. The girl watched him disappear over behind the shed. Allen came.

This rebuff, strange to say, only deepened Bud's determination to intervene effectively as between the girl and Yardlow. There had been a thrill to his being as he had listened to her vibrant voice that had set his heart like steel against having her life wrecked by Yardlow.

Bud Joyce waited, in the shadows, as the music came drifting out to him and the moonlight shifted and drifted as the clouds sailed, majestic and serene, above the toils and taunts and errors of human lives.

Bud Joyce suddenly loosened his guns in their holsters, thrust out his big chin —and strode up along the shed's rear. He stepped quietly now. He rounded the upper end of the shed and came out into the space between hotel and shed again. The pinto, with Manuel at the bridle, was starting for the dance-room door.

"Señor," Bud said politely, *"donar me uno fósforo."*

Manuel wheeled, the desired match in his fingers. There was nothing to fear from such a courteous man in that hotel back yard, it seemed. He was just a dancer, out for a smoke, away from the ladies.

*"Si, señor,"* Manuel answered, complying.

Suddenly a gun leaped and Manuel's nerveless fingers dropped the bridle reins. Bud shepherded Manuel under the shed's overhang, letting the pinto's reins drop. Bud tied and gagged Manuel, using the fellow's own neckcloth for the gag. He took the man's serape, an ample one, draping it over his own shoulders. He put on Manuel's high-crowned hat, with its belled rim and silver ornamentation. He pocketed the shells from Manuel's belt. The shells made his trousers sag, but he foresaw use for plenty of shells later. Then Bud got pinto's bridle reins again. He stepped along toward the dance-room door. He reached it just as Yardlow came out—whistling.

"Right on time, Manuel; I'll tip you an extra dollar t'-morrow."

*"Gracias, señor,"* answered Joyce softly.

"The señorita will be here in a minute; I'll look at the *cinchas* t' make sure now while there's time," and Yardlow came around to the near side, where Manuel was, holding the bridle in such a way that he was behind the pinto.

Yardlow rounded the horse's head.

A heavy gun butt descended!

## CHAPTER VII.

### KIDNAPED.

THE pinto horse danced. Bud spoke quietly to him.

Yardlow's limp body he had caught against one side of his own powerful frame, easing it with one strong arm while with the steely wrist and forearm on the other side he checked the pinto's plunges.

"Now, pinto hoss; steady; no more of it."

The pinto steadied, showing good training and the mastery of the cool-witted puncher who was working for control over his spirit. He stood quietly soon, and then Bud dropped the reins again.

"That's a good li'le hoss; he was gentled proper," Bud thought, as he dragged Yardlow across the space between hotel and shed. He got the man in the shadows and tied him up with some straps he found on a peg. He gagged Yardlow with his silk neckerchief. Then he went to the head of the

pinto horse, just in time to see the dance-room door open and the girl come out. Just then the moon went behind a cloud. The yard was but half lighted.

"Oh—is it you, Manuel?" she asked, drawing partly back.

"*Si,* señorita," said Joyce, speaking slowly. "Dhee Señor Yeerdlow, he say he will be on dhee road; hees caballo, he wants buck an' pitch, so he let him have eet out on dhee street a ways; you come weeth me, señora; he weel be right along; Ah'm leadin' dhee pinto. Ah'm reeding my caballo, when you are in saddle."

She had on her divided skirt. She did not question this statement, as it was plausible. Nothing had happened to alarm her up until then. She had supreme confidence in her husband to be, and Manuel had been made known to her as his servant. She mounted, the "Mexican" holding her stirrup and swinging her up in approved style. He went toward the horse, hitched at the corner of the shed, mounted him, and ranged alongside of her. His big hat was well down over his face. His serape was hunched up over his shoulders.

"Theesa way, señorita," the man urged, riding before her. The big cloud remained over the moon, yet it was passing.

As they went onto the street, far ahead, there was a man riding, by chance, and the man with Clarice pointed to him with confidence.

"Dhee Señor Yeerdlow, señorita," he said slowly, and they started into a little lope.

Clarice was happy. The moon came out now, silvering everything. The man lagged behind her, and she rode ahead. The man riding off up there went fast now, seemingly bent upon riding to some set destination. He was a near-by homesteader loping for his shack in the upper hills.

"That can't be Mr. Yardlow; he wouldn't ride off like that and leave me," Clarice said.

"He plays some *burla*—some joke," the "Mexican" whispered. "Dhee Señor Yeerdlow is of a nature jovial, señorita."

"It may be," she answered, debating this in her mind.

Now they were at the town's end. She reined in and looked back.

The lights from the buildings winked and blinked. The larger illumination at the Antelope Hotel showed plainly.

"I wish I was back—I begin to feel that something is wrong. Mr. Yardlow would have appeared by this time, had all been right."

So Clarice began, edging the pinto horse about. But a strong arm and lean, sinewy hand shot out. The bridle of the pinto horse was grasped firmly.

"What does this mean?" the girl demanded, bending forward.

The moon was shining now, the last big cloud having passed. Bud threw up the brim of the high-peaked hat and spoke in his natural voice.

"It means that you'll not marry that skunk Yardlow."

"Oh—it's you—you—again forcing yourself upon me!" She choked and then finished: "You coward; you beast, you brute! Let me go—I hate you."

"I don't care about that, ma'am. You're not goin' t' marry Yardlow."

"What is to prevent, scoundrel!"

"Well, I am, for one thing, an' I generally prevent what I aim t' prevent, ma'am. You're goin' with me into the foothills an' over the ranges."

"Where to?"

"To my own home. I've got a mother and sister, as I once said t' you. I'll get you somewhere where they'll tell you the truth about Yardlow."

"I think you're crazy. You can't carry a woman off like this and not be punished! You can't force yourself on me."

"Mebbe I cain't, but I'm doin' it, ma'am. You'll go like a peaceable girl, or like a bag of meal, tied onto that pinto hoss, ma'am," he told her determinedly.

"I'll scream—some decent American will hear me——"

"I guess I'm the only one in sight, ma'am."

"Only what?" she asked scornfully.

"Decent American—savin' yourself, an' you're so plumb locoed over that skunk Yardlow that——"

"I won't listen to that sort of talk," she declared vehemently.

"No harm done, but you'll go with me!"

"I won't——"

She slipped off the horse and started to run. Bud let Pinto's reins drop. He spurred Pepper after her. The light was good.

She heard the swishing rope without comprehending rightly what it meant. She felt herself jerked over sidewise. Then Bud was over her, his voice insistent and low.

"Sorry, but I had t' do it, ma'am. I didn't want t' harm you. Now, you'll come with me or I'll tie you onto the hoss. Yell, an' I'll gag you."

"I hate you—you monster, I won't go in peace. I won't consent to anything you propose."

"It's all the same t' me, ma'am. But you're not goin' t' marry Yardlow. That's flat an' goes as she lays, ma'am."

"I'll have nothing but scorn for you, sir," she declared wildly.

"I'll stand that, ma'am. I'm havin' some scorn for a tallow haid like you that don't know any better'n t' marry Yardlow."

"I forbid you to mention his name again, sir," she said, getting up. He let the rope fall from her with a facile twist of its slack.

"Suits me not t' mention him none, ma'am," answered Joyce quietly.

"Oh—you beast."

"Yes'm, I know it, but I'd rather you called me one than that you'd live with one, like Yardlow."

"What is it to you whom I live with, as you're a stranger to me, sir?"

"I've took a notion t' keep you from being a wreck, that's all. Now, will you go with me, tied or untied?"

She began, with womanly care, to brush her dusted clothing. Her mind was working like lightning. She was not a weakling. The country was new to her, that was all. She did not know what to expect or how to act in an emergency out there. In Omaha she would have known what to do. Out there everything was different. It seemed there was a different line of resistance to meet and a different set of rules!

"He may treat me better if I go peaceably for a time," she thought. "The first house we pass on the road I can call for help."

"I'll ride without being bound," she agreed.

"That's good—fork that hoss."

"Fork the horse?" she asked, starting back.

"Mount him; I won't he'p you, for I've known a man t' get kicked in the face that a way by a girl he was tryin' t' take away against her will."

"Oh, then you've kidnaped women before?"

"No; I read that part in a paper that told about how a girl was stolen by outlaws."

"Are you an outlaw?" she inquired breathlessly.

"If I said I wasn't you'd say I was a beast or a liar. Fork that hoss, now," he commanded insistently. He led her back to the side of pinto hoss and watched her mount.

"Now we'll ride! Remember that I can rope you down any time you start. I can ride you down, anywhere you go. If necessary, I'll put you on that hoss an' tie your laigs under his belly, an'

your hands t' the saddle horn. Take your choice, ma'am."

In another moment they were riding up the trail.

Clarice's mind was clear now and her purpose clear. She meant to stave off actual violence as long as she could and to resort to every trick and stratagem possible, in order to get away from this strange man who was either a crazy person or an outlaw. She had confidence that she would be traced, and she felt that Yardlow would leave nothing undone to rescue her before long.

The moon swung low; the clouds veiled its face entirely now. Clarice wondered why they did not pass a house.

Bud could have told her that he had swung off the trail and taken to the open country to the northeast of the town. He was cutting for the distant foothills of the Bear Range. A notch in the range was the pass through which he had drifted in his restless touring for adventure a week before, when he had been heading for the Bend.

"I hate you; I hate you," she flung at him from time to time.

"All right, ma'am, so long's you keep ridin' and don't put me out of mind entire, ma'am——"

"Sir!"

Then she was frigidly silent. Bud chuckled.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SEARCH IS ON.

FOR a time after Yardlow went out, no one noticed his absence. When inquiry was made, Billson, Hamer, and Sid Allen were able to tell the people that the intended bride and groom had gone for a ride. The music was started up again.

But after a time this explanation failed to satisfy.

"They maybe a-holdin' hands on my front lawn, eh?" said Hamer, and stalked off up the street. Like all the others he lacked his guns.

Arrived at his home, he soon satisfied himself that the two were not there. Then he went back, striding along rather angrily. It all seemed foolish to him, anyway, this search after Yardlow and the girl. Yardlow would know how to explain his absence, he thought.

He told the others that he had not found Yardlow. Some were for letting the search drop and going on with the dance. Others insisted that the two be found.

"I know Yardlow wanted t' be back right soon," Hamer said "He wanted to have my wife take the girl home and then we were goin' t' let out an' have a real shindig, instead of holdin' in an' being too proper to enjoy ourselves, like we been doin'."

"Yardlow, he'd not go back on a deal like that," Sid Allen put in.

Now they began to look about the place. Some one heard a low groan in the shed. They dashed forward and found Yardlow, his gag half worked off. They quickly unbound him and tried to query him, but his mouth was swollen and he could not talk at first. Some one found Manuel, likewise a helpless captive.

"What's wrong here?" Hamer demanded, when his chief could talk.

Yardlow was sitting up on a bale of hay. They had brought lanterns. Manuel was thrust forward, muttering and stuttering.

"That skunk hit me over the haid with a gun. That's the last I remember," Yardlow finally jerked out, pointing to Manuel.

"He was tied up, too," Hamer objected.

"Then some one else did it—Manuel, what happened?"

"Ah'm coming weeth dhee pinto caballo, señores. Ah'm hold oop weeth beeg gun. *Un* hombre, he tie me and tie my face, señores. Dhat's all Ah'm theenking on dheesa theeng, señores."

"He had on Manuel's lid an' serape,"

Yardlow said. "Who could it've been; where's Miss Golden?"

"She's missing!"

"Ropes o' fire!" he exclaimed. And he managed to get afoot. "Gone?"

"No one's seen her since she came out t' go with you. You told two-three of us you was goin' for a ride with her, so we thought it was all right when she went right after you an' didn't come back right off."

"Suppose any o' the boys are playing a joke on us?" Yardlow suggested.

"No; every one's accounted for; no one would dare try that with we-all ready t' ride it out and shoot it out against them," Billson reminded him confidently.

"I don't quite get it," Yardlow had to admit. "What's the object of all this?"

"Listen, boys," and Sid Allen drew the heads of Yardlow, Billson, and Hamer in so that he could whisper to them apart from the crowd:

"When we went to get that cuss Joyce, didn't he say he was coming after Yardlow, now that Yardlow had opened on him? Let's find him. If he ain't in town, it's him."

"That's it," and Yardlow's hand came down onto Allen's shoulder. "If you'd had nerve enough t've gone back and potted him, this wouldn't have happened."

"No, but you wasn't up against those guns of his," Allen reminded his chief.

Yardlow now raised his voice and told them, without letting them know that he had sent the two killers to slay Joyce while he slept, that he had reason to believe that Joyce held enmity for him, Yardlow. If Joyce was not in town, he thought he should be looked up. Meantime they must continue to search for Miss Golden. He offered large rewards to whoever should fetch to him the first news of the pair or of either of them.

At once the people dispersed and an active search was begun. This continued for several anxious hours. Yardlow, alarmed for the loss of the girl because of what she would mean to him in cash, was like a madman. He went everywhere, urging the searchers to redouble their efforts. The stables were searched. The horse of Joyce was nowhere. His former camp site was visited, but of course without avail.

The pinto horse was gone, too, it seemed.

There were good trailers in the town. Yardlow himself was not to be despised on the trail. He had noted the short space between imprint of heel and ball of foot in the tracks made by Miss Golden at the door of the dance room where she had stepped aside to see the pinto horse. He went out the upper trail with the first of the dawn, and where the trail turned, where Bud had roped the girl, he found a trace that he could identify.

He read the sign easily and shouted. The crowd came on the run.

"She tried t' get away here," he showed them. "She ran, was roped, and thrown. Some skunk has her, and it's that Joyce, I'll be bound. He is a mean-faced skunk, and he means her some mischief. Think of kidnapin' a woman that a way!"

"That Joyce, he let drop in my place," a saloon keeper spoke up, "that he hailed from over beyond the Bear Range, an' drifted in here through Sugar Pine Notch," he said, pointing toward the blue-black saddle in the farther up-flung masses beyond the nearer foothills.

"Then he's making for it; for he struck right across the country. We'll get a wire message up t' Rawson by a fast goer, an' warn Sheriff Bascomb at Bear Creek t' watch for him," Yardlow decided. "And we'll take this end of the trail. It's speed now; load your war bags an' ride! This may turn out t' be a long trail. That geezer is a bad man, and we've got t' keep right after him till we get him. Once we do,

hangin' over a slow fire'll be none too good for him. A man that'll kidnap a woman that a way ain't fitten t' live."

And their growls proved how well they echoed his sentiments.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HARDSHIPS OF THE TRAIL.

THROUGH the night Bud led the captive he had taken—led her relentlessly and with fairly rapid pace. He wanted to be out of the bowl in which Harrison's Bend was situated, well over the highest ridge and sky line before the day came to reveal him to possible watchers with high-power glasses, for once seen, they could take a bee line for his place of passing and also have a line on his intentions, without having to follow, yard by yard, the sign he and his captive were making.

To Clarice, used to easy riding in city parks and on roads, the night was almost a nightmare of impossible endurance. She was strong and well nerved. But after the horse under her had slid unexpectedly down into several hollows and clambered out of them, she was tired—her back aching. The pinto did credit to whoever had gentled him. He proved willing and able to keep his nose to the tail of Pepper. Indeed, he had been used as a pack pony, as well as a saddler, by the Circle Double A, and was accustomed to follow a leader willingly. Bud had pieced out the bridle reins by tying a bit of strong cord to the end of the hand wrap and this made leading the pinto easier. He had given the girl warning not to try to escape in the night. She had decided not to try to do it, for it seemed that the man who had taken her in charge did not intend her bodily harm, but was possessed only with the idea of getting over as much ground as possible in her company. If it had not been for the ache in her back she would not have minded it all so much. If it had not been for the high horn and the high cantle, she would have fallen from the pinto horse from sheer fatigue. Joyce saw to it that her *cinchas* were kept tight. Once during the night he gave her a drink from his canteen. At first she was disposed not to take it, but she was very thirsty.

"You'll need it," he reminded her. "We've got t' keep a-goin' right along."

"Then you're afraid they'll get you!" she exclaimed.

"No; I'm afraid they'll get you and take you back t' Yardlow," he answered shortly.

"Why not turn me loose; I might promise not to go back to him," she said.

"No; whoever found you in this region would turn you over t' Yardlow. If I get you over the ranges, you'll be where you can find out all about Yardlow and can have a choice about the matter."

"But I'd have a chance right now if I refused to marry him," she declared vehemently.

"You have no chance at all, miss. He'd come along an' cozen you a bit an' that'd be all," said, spitting in disgust.

"You've not much of an opinion as to my ability to take care of myself!" she declared hotly.

"I have not, ma'am," Joyce came back with positiveness.

"I hate you worse than ever, now. What's your name? I want to know so that I can have it written in the warrant when I get to where one can be sworn out against you."

"Bud Joyce, of Joyce's Lazy One Eleven, ma'am. That's where my folks live, ma'am. Late years I've been working away from home, havin' had a fallin' out with my dad."

"I don't care for your family history," she reminded him, scorn in her voice.

"No, ma'am; it ain't much interestin', I suppose; we'll ramble some more now."

How many times she almost dropped from exhaustion, Clarice could not have told. Early in their strange flight she found the leather buck strap a solace, then a necessity. He told her what it was on the saddle for. She had never had one on her saddle in the city. Yet, even with it, she felt in danger of slipping off many, many times.

The terror of the night, of the unknown, was upon her. She felt that she had to go on and on. She felt that if this strange man were to desert her in the outlands, she would be lost. She knew the country was sparsely settled—the houses, away from each small settlement, far apart. She had found out early that they were following no road and that no scream she could utter would avail to bring to her aid any one who could rescue her from her predicament.

Dawn found them in a little draw, carpeted at the bottom with grass, for there was a small spring with a steady seepage. Bud had found it with seeming ease. He turned the horses out for a roll and some grass. He kept them away from the spring, watering them with water from his hat.

He gave the young woman a drink and showed her a comfortable place to sit down. He mounded up dry grass and leaves in a hollow between two rocks, laid a blanket over them, and motioned for her to be at ease.

"I won't go to sleep, though," she said with a break in her voice.

"Why not; don't be foolish," he said, stepping toward her, his face showing a strange concern and pity.

"Because—well, I don't want to go to sleep—that's all."

"Ma'am," said Joyce, an appealing earnestness in his voice and on his homely, lined countenance, "if you're afraid o' me, just take a gun an' kill me."

He was close to her now, standing with hands up, the guns in his belt unguarded and ready, so that she could snatch one.

"I couldn't shoot a man," she faltered. "I never shot off a revolver. Perhaps you know that and are just making a mock-heroic bluff," she said with bitterness tinging her voice anew.

"Ma'am," he said, "I didn't think about you not being handy with guns. Most Western girls can use one, a little. Some can use them mighty well. Perhaps I wasn't offering you much in offerin' you a hand hold on a gun, as against me, that's used to guns. But I was tryin' t' prove t' you that I'm meaning well. You needn't sleep unless you want t'."

She was tired. She did not think of him. If he were tired, the iron man did not show it. He stepped about, making small preparations for a fire.

"We ain't goin' t' eat much," he told her, standing over her. "I've got some salt that I took off a bar in town, and pepper. I'll try t' kill a young jack rabbit or a quail. If we have t' go hongry t'-day an' maybe t'-morrow, why we will. Don't try t' run away; I can follow your sign. An' you won't be mounted, either, for I've hid the saddles, and pinto won't let you catch him." She hardly heard him. Despite the agony in her back, sleep was touching her eyelids. Then she jerked awake, to find him gone, but a small fire was burning, clear, without smoke, beside the spring.

She sat up with her right elbow under her and watched the clear little flame. She wanted to get up, to run, but she saw the folly of the attempt. She knew he would find her, if she started afoot. She wished to avoid any foolish, weak attempts to escape. She wanted to bide her time till she could make an attempt worthy of the name.

Then she jerked awake again. He was coming back.

He had a rabbit by the hind legs. The body was limp.

"Got him off guard under a rattle

weed," he announced. "It ain't the best meat, but I'm hongry, clear through."

She watched him dress it expertly, watched him spit the cuts of it on green twigs that bent over the embers that now glowed redly. He fed them with dry shavings to keep them glowing so, without smoke. In a short time the rabbit was broiled. He presented Clarice her meal laid out on some big leaves that he cut from a bush. He dusted them with salt, and she sniffed of them longingly.

"They won't hurt you; you've got t' eat t' keep up enough stren'th t' swear out that warrant against me, ma'am," he said, grinning at her, as he held a rabbit bone up and chewed off the meet with gusto.

Her lips became firm. She aroused herself and took the meat, saying: "Yes; I'm going to live through this somehow. You'll live to be sorry if you bring me into a civilized place again."

He did not reply, but ate ravenously. She was surprised to find the rabbit meat, although a bit gamey-flavored, good and tender.

"There," he announced, throwing away the last bone. "Now t' take that ache out of your back."

He kicked the embers apart and dug into the loose soil with the point of his knife. Soon he had unearthed a round stone, about the size of a small muskmelon. This he got into his neckcloth and carried it to her, saying:

"I'll just snuggle this into the hollow o' your back and it'll draw some of that ache out o' you. Now just take a sleep."

"And you?" she asked, surprised to find how the heat from the stone, striking through her clothing, soothed that savage ache.

"Me? I don't need any sleep, being a villain, ma'am," he answered her sarcastically. "Any man like me that kidnaps a handsome girl away from her innocent, honest, God-fearin' husband t' be, is not worthy o' being made into buzzard meat."

She did not say anything. The heat from the stone, pervading her tired muscles, was bringing to her a sense of comfort. She had many minor aches that had been swallowed up in that big ache. Now that the big ache was to a certain degree soothed, she relaxed. She had had little sleep on the train coming from Omaha. She had been in a state of emotional excitement all day in the Bend. She had gone to the dance keyed up to the breaking point. She had looked for a good night of sleep after the celebration. She had been kept going all night in a manner to which she was not accustomed—going on the back of a plunging horse, that went into hollows and cut banks and scrambled along knife-edge ridges, through the brush at times and again over rocks, again through sand. She had not the least idea of where they were. The sudden dawn had found them in this depression where the spring was. And she could not see out of it.

Gradually she fought less and less against the power of coming slumber.

Then, with a sigh, she gave way to her weariness and slept.

She never knew how long she slept. The sun was bright, well overhead, when she was awakened by her captor, who shook her aching shoulder briskly.

"Get up, ma'am. We've got t' ramble right off pronto."

She got up unsteadily. He jerked the blanket up that she had been using and began to fold it. The horses, already saddled up, stood waiting.

"We'll be among the higher hills by night," he told her. "I may've stayed too long here already; but you was so done up, I couldn't bear t' wake you up before.

"Did you sleep?" she asked.

"That's my bus'ness."

## CHAPTER X.

### PURSUIT.

SWINGING out of the Bend with the first light, Yardlow, Billson, Hamer, and Sid Allen, with a picked band of trailers at their back, began to run the sign of the captor and captive. At first it was easy to run. Then it got onto "tight ground" that the man they were after had an uncanny way of hiding. But they followed the sign. It ran into a cattle trace, and they lost it till they found where he had turned off. It got onto knife-edge ridges and among rocky going. They had to go slow, but they made some time. Yardlow was raging and yet cool in his methodical unraveling of the trail.

"Their general direction is that saddle in the Bear Range; we ought t' start part of the men straight for that," Hamer told Yardlow after they had been gone three hours. "If he tries to cross there, they may head him off. Meanwhile, we can stick t' the trail itself. Or we three can ride to Rawson, take a train, and come in from the Bear Valley side."

That seemed such good advice that it was adopted. Hamer headed this band of cut-off men. Yardlow stuck to the trace itself. Allen and Billson went with Hamer. By rail they could make good time to Bear Valley.

The pursuers were heavily armed. It had been agreed that Hamer, Allen, and Billson should meet them at a cabin in the pass, if possible.

From time to time they discussed what should be done to Bud Joyce when he was captured. It gave them real pleasure to contemplate his downfall.

"Public opinion will stand for any sort of punishment on a man that kidnaps a woman that a way," Yardlow reminded them.

"A li'le Apache stuff won't be resented," Billson agreed.

"No, not any," Yardlow gloated. "We're bound t' get him, somewhere, some time. When we do——"

His lip lifted in its wolf snarl. His eyes seemed to dance in their sockets and to scintillate a flame of hatred. His blond, pointed mustache had lost none of its stiffness; it lifted and twitched with the wolf snarl of his full lips. Never had the man seemed so like a handsome devil as in that hour of rage and anticipation of coming revenge against the man who had flouted him on the verge of his hour of triumph!

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FIGHT.

ALL day they rode, and the girl kept taut in her saddle at times by the feeling that if she were to faint, she would be helpless. The man's actions during the past night had been reassuring, but once awake, on the trail, with the memory of his forceful kidnaping of her again in mind, all her old distrust returned. She sensed from his insistence upon speed that he knew he was being trailed. He did not refer to that. Several times she tried to drop things—her handkerchief, her neckcloth, hairpins. He noted each such attempt and, without losing time, simply swung over in the saddle and picked them up. His almost effortless ease in mastery of every problem of the trail forced concealed admiration from her. Every attempt he made to be kind she misconstrued as an attempt to win her favor to lessen the effects of whatever punishment would follow.

They saw no human habitation. They saw range cattle. Two or three times he made strange detours. She did not know the reason for them, but Bud Joyce had noted range riders for neighboring outfits afar and had kept away from them. He lighted no fire that day. They kept off the sky line—down in the lower reaches of the country. They had begun to get into a region where the

draws had deepened into shallow cañons. They made up one of these, across the rise of land, then plunged down into another. Their progress over the high necks were rapid; in the cañons they went at a more leisurely pace. They were among rocks often; on "tight ground" flats not a little. Whenever they came to where cattle had crossed they rode in their traces.

Night found them well among the foothills. The Bear Range lifted its masses ahead—dim, mysterious, awe-inspiring to the woman of the city transported to this distant region so strangely.

He found a glade with a spring. He made camp there. He had been silent much of the day. He had tightened her cinches for her, given her water, made her get off her horse and rest several times. So far as possible, he had eased the toils of the journey for her, but her body was now a mass of aches.

"I believe you are trying to kill me," she flung at him, as he threw her blankets down for her.

"All right; I don't care what you think, ma'am. You're goin' t' my mother and then you can do what you like about me."

"But I don't want to see your mother! She is nothing to me."

"That's all right, ma'am," he answered her quietly. "You're a-goin' t' be kept away from Yardlow, and that's whatever."

"Do you think you can keep me from him forever?" she asked with rising heat.

"It won't be necessary, maybe," he came back in a voice hardly audible.

"You seem to have confidence in your course of treatment."

"Which I sure have, ma'am. I have some reliance on your brains when they get a chance t' work."

She tried to make him answer questions as to their route and his intentions as to the immediate future. He curtly cut her off and went about making camp. He had shot two quail during the day, cutting their heads off with deadly accuracy as they had scudded before the horses. He broiled these. With some wild onions they made an ample meal. Again he found a hot stone under the place where the fire had been made and gave it to her, saying:

"We'll start at midnight; we cain't wait longer."

"All right," she came back with apparent cheerfulness.

She heard the horses cropping the grass; she saw the man prop himself against rock and sensed that he meant to keep watch—not sleep. She marveled at the iron endurance of him and recalled how clever and apt he was at all stratagems and tricks of the open. She thought of the pursuit that must be afoot and of how he had kept ahead of it and how they had not seen, so far as she knew, a single soul, in their flight.

The man with his back against the rock became a blur in her sight. The food, the sense of security she felt when he had thus cared for her, had their effect; she slept.

She came awake to find him shaking her shoulder. The aches were less now. She was stiff of muscle. The night air was cool, like a tonic. The exercise of getting ready to start warmed her.

The girl did not feel so helpless now. She had recovered her poise, and she began to plan her escape. She knew that they must come close to human habitations some time and she meant, when she got even a distant glimpse of a ranch house or a town, to make a dash, when he was about some camp task or after game, for liberty. She had no conception of what it would mean to try to find her way through the cut-up country. But she was full of hope and a growing confidence now.

The man had some sort of a craze for getting her away from Yardlow. She accepted that in him. He was Yardlow's enemy, no doubt. Yardlow had

not mentioned having enemies to her. But then, she reasoned, Yardlow would not parade his personal affairs, especially on the verge of their marriage.

She liked to think of her lover, Yardlow, toiling after her, raising the country to take vengeance upon this kidnaper who had taken her away in such cavalier fashion. She was determined that with the dawn she would begin plans for escape.

What time it was when they began to ride she never knew. The night was dark. They went slowly. The horses were stiff and tired at the start, but soon limbered up and went willingly. The pinto trailed the gray nicely. The sky grayed; was tinged with rose; a light drew across the east like a band of old rose, notched with blue. They were in a pass and the air was very chilly.

The light grew and then the rising pass ahead was blotched with a grayish blanket and the sound of sheep came to them. The horses snorted and showed a desire to stampede or buck. Joyce spoke to Pepper harshly and the horse gave over his fear of the hated woolies. The pinto quieted down; they drew to one side of the trail.

The horses showed their dislike for the sheep, but remained steady till they had passed. Through the pass the woolies went in orderly array, knowing they would find feed beyond. Behind came the Mexican *pastore* and his two dogs. He saluted gravely, eying them keenly. It was the first meeting with a human being since they had begun their flight.

The *pastore* leaned on his long staff. Joyce spoke to him.

*"Buenos dias, amigo!"*

The man bowed gracefully, with the studied courtesy of his race. Then he smiled.

"If you see the Señor Yardlow, you have not seen me, Miguel," Bud spoke softly.

*"Si, señor;* it shall be as you weesh."

"Is the country aroused ahead?"

*"Si, señor,* but it weel not do dhee Señor Yeerdlow mooch good eff you are making eet down into dhee Bear. As for me, eef he roast in purgatory, Ah'm pleased. Ah'm remember what Señor Yeerdlow did to *pobrecita mia,* Paquita," he said, and his face was convulsed with hatred. "My sheep shall follow on your track, Señor Joyce, and tr-r-r-rample them out."

Bud waved him good-by and jerked on the lead string. The pinto followed. Clarice, who had intended appealing to the Mexican, had been restrained by the knowledge that her captor and the man were friends. The strange attire of the sheep-herder, his uncouth appearance, deterred her. City bred, she had not yet learned to look under the exterior of man for the real qualities that make him good or evil!

"What did he mean by saying he remembered what Yardlow had done to some one?" She found herself constrained to ask Bud, who did not refer to it as they climbed the low grade of the saddle-notch pass.

"Laik I tried t' tell you at first. Yardlow married his girl, pretty li'le thing. She died in a year."

"Oh—but he was your friend and would say anything to please you."

"But how did he know what to say, seein' as I'd not seen him for months before we met just then?"

She had no reply to that, but it set her to thinking.

Bud had noted, before meeting the sheep, that there had been no fresh tracks in the pass ahead of them. He had taken this as an augury that his route had not been divined in advance.

Clarice was tired—dog tired. She was hoping they would rest. Bud cut that hope short.

"We'll keep a-goin'. If I can get down on the other side, about thirty miles, we'll be in country where I've got real friends. I'll be willin' then t' let

you go, an' I'll strike out into the hills and hide out. You can start all the posses after me you like, so long as you do it, not Yardlow."

She studied the man anew. She wondered if what the sheepman had said had any basis in fact. Had she been saved from a life of misery or an early death, by the ruthlessness of this man whose will was like adamant to keep her from marrying Yardlow?

She thought of proposing that if he would turn her loose within sight of some habitation she would not start pursuit after him—would let him go free.

And all the time she was racked by weariness and pain. The saddle pains were not so bad now. But the shortness of food was telling on her. Her body seemed one dull ache that was mounting to agony.

Once she lost control of herself and burst out with: "Oh, I wish I was dead —why do you make me go on and on?"

"You might better be daid than Mrs. Yardlow," he replied with seeming lack of passion. In fact his voice was all but toneless—flat, steady, sure of phrase in framing that reply. In it she read finality, so far as his changing his plans was concerned.

Ahead, where the pass seemed to come to a definite slope, she saw a cabin perched against the side of the pass, on a little bench. Beside it a stream showed white as it spilled its water outward. She noted that no water flowed their way, so she judged that the water from that stream went down into the other valley.

"That's Summit Camp," he told her, seeing she was interested. "Sheepmen put it up as a refuge in passing over the divide in spring and autumn, going from summer to winter grounds. That stream comes down a side draw that connects with Cut-off Cañon. I'll look up it and see if there are any fresh tracks coming out of it."

"Could those after us have cut around that way and headed us off?" she asked.

"If they knew the Cut-off fed into this pass, yes," he answered simply. "Do you wish they'd do it?" he asked, a half taunt in his voice and manner.

She did not answer.

"We'll be where you'll find people t' stay with, if you won't go to our ranch, about t'-morrow night," he told her. Then he dropped the lead string and pinto horse began to crop the grass on the slope. He refused to touch it in the pass itself, where the sheep had trodden it down. Joyce came to her presently to report.

"No one's been down that li'le side draw, and that means they didn't come through Cut-off Cañon and circle over through the range to this place. It could be done by real men, though," he added with an accent of scorn for those who had not done the hard task in order to head them off.

"We'll rest in the cabin," he decided. "The hosses need a roll and drink and a chance t' fill up. They're gettin' plumb gaunted. We'll maybe find some air-tights in the cabin. I mean stuff t' eat in cans."

Then he asked her a rather disconcerting question: "When I left that lead cord down, why'n't you start that pinto away? You could've caught up with Miguel an' his sheep; their trace is plain, right back down the pass."

She wondered herself at it, now that he had asked the question. She had no answer for him, save a stony stare that she thought would disconcert him. But he laughed till he rolled in his saddle.

"Maybe you're thinking Yardlow ain't none too nice, after all."

"I—I hate you," she found herself saying sharply.

He laughed again.

He rode for the cabin. She followed, without her horse being led. At the cabin they swung down stiffly. He led the horses around behind the cabin and

tied them for the moment, intending to be guided as to their length of stay by the condition in which he found the cabin. If it were disordered and dirty he meant to ride on and make a camp in the open, after taking any food that might be available.

He rounded the cabin to face the trail again. Clarice was not in sight. But he heard her inside and she spoke.

"I have found some tinned stuff on a shelf—beans, tomatoes, apricots——"

"That's good," he was beginning, when he stared down the pass. Three men were riding up, and they had seen him.

He sprang into the cabin just in time as a rifle ball cut the air. He had recognized them—Hamer, Sid Allen, Billson!

"What is it—what has happened?" she asked, dropping the can she had been examining.

"Some of your husband-to-be's friends," he answered her grimly.

"And they shot at you?"

"Sure did— there they are, hailin' me; go on out an' give yourself up." He said this last with bitter irony.

"Hey, Joyce," they heard Hamer call. "Come on out; we've got the dead wood on you. Send out that woman of Yardlow's; you'll never come out, unless it's through the smoke."

"Yes, send her out; Yardlow will know what t' do with her," Billson called.

Bud looked at her. Her face was white.

"Go on out," he urged with cutting sarcasm.

"I don't want to——" she decided.

"Send that woman of Yardlow's out t' us," Sid Allen roared.

"The way is clear; you can go when you like," Bud told Clarice.

"I don't want to go—they are not—not Yardlow," she faltered.

"Well, he sent them after you."

"Send her out; Yardlow'll know what t' do——" one of them called again. It was evident that liquor had loosened their tongues.

"I'd rather stay with you than go to them," she decided.

"It means a fight," he told her grimly.

"Oh, I wouldn't have a fight over me—oh, not that," she said, putting an arm up to cover her eyes.

"There's no two ways about it; it's them or me now," he answered, and he drew his guns, spinning the cylinders to make sure they were in good, smooth-working order. He pushed her aside and slammed and barred the heavy door.

"You'll stay quiet, in a corner," Joyce commanded her, and he spoke with authority. "Whether you want a fight or not don't rest with you. There's t' *be* a fight. If you go with them they'll still attack me, so don't get no soft i-de-as that a way. They'll push me to a fight, and that's whatever."

She cowered in the corner. This direct, elemental attack frightened her. She had been picturing a moment when they would meet some one to whom she could appeal and then go away from Bud Joyce who had forced her into such a strange position. Now she had seen the faces of rescuers that Yardlow had sent for her and heard their threats against herself.

"I'm not goin' to stay inside," Bud was telling her. "I came in here as a ruse. They'll try t' get the hosses first, so I'll be afoot. But you stay close. I won't let anything happen t' you. They won't take you unless you say so. Now, good-by."

He went out of the rear door like a cat.

There was a chink close to where she was and she peeped out, curiosity mastering fear that seemed to be less as the emergency impended.

She saw the three men dismount and come toward the cabin on the run, dropping just under the rise of the bank. One of them crept over the bank. Nothing happened. He started toward the

rear of the cabin, while the other two thudded against the barred door that sprang in with their weight.

She could not see the men at the door, but she did see Sid Allen, his guns out, rush for the rear of the cabin and the horses, that now clumped about there. Pepper had not nickered, but pinto had shown his lack of training by letting every one know visitors were coming as soon as the men began their talking to Joyce.

She saw Allen's gun swing down; his hand was plumed with white smoke. Then he pitched forward on his face and was still.

It had all happened so quickly that she could hardly realize it. She never had looked upon death, except in the ordinary form, when a funeral had occurred in her family. It showed her like a crashing thunderbolt of revelation what the man who had brought her away from Yardlow faced. It sobered her, steadied her. In some vague way she began to realize what it all meant to him.

The men at the door at once fell upon silence. She did not hear a sound from them for a time. Then she heard one whisper:

"Can he have some one with him that can shoot?"

"We better get to cover."

Like a shadow Joyce was in the room with her. How he had entered without making a sound she could not tell. He whispered to her.

"Talk to them—say anything—talk to them."

"Mr. Hamer," she called.

"Yes; is that you, Miss Golden?"

"Yes."

Joyce was at the door, gun in one hand, one hand on the bar. At once his purpose was apparent to her, and she signed him to draw back.

Instead, he suddenly swung the bar aside—the door open.

The two killers, their backs to the door, in the attitude of rushing for the cover of the bank's break, whirled, hands at hips. Joyce, throwing a gun into his right hand and at the same time starting his left gun to talking, met the flashing roll of their gun fire with a literal spray of death. He coughed, leaned forward, and the two fell over, one to the side, the other to the front, hands clutching at their bodies desperately, futile guns clattering to the ground.

"They got me," Joyce said, managing to holster his guns with the instinctive motion of the trained fighter. "They got me, but they're gone—over the ranges. Take my Pepper hoss; he'll let you—an' ride down the pass. There's a plain trail; you can't miss it. Ask any one t' direct you t' the Joyce ranch. It's forty miles by the long trail. I could make it short cuttin' in thirty miles. Ride—Yardlow will come here; he's likely appointed this as a meetin' place, sent them an' their hosses by rail from Rawson t' ride in this way—ride; you'll be safe at my home an' if you want Yardlow after you hear the truth about the man from my own mother, go t' him. Ride; ride; that's all."

He fell forward.

The woman got up, her face white.

The awful fight, the sight of the dead men, the sight of this man stricken to the verge of death, moved something deep in her. The woman, the mother, awoke in her, to a service of pity and usefulness. Like every true woman when faced with a crisis calling for the exercise of her powers of salvage in behalf of man, she responded with what of strength she possessed.

The dead men she left there; to the man with the faint spark of life she gave her attention. She dragged him to the rude bunk, pulled the blankets in their roll apart and padded the bunk with them, and found strength somehow to lift the man onto the bunk. She worked beyond any strength she ever had found at her command before.

## CHAPTER XII.

### JOYCE GETS YARDLOW.

WHILE she worked it became very dark and a mountain storm descended. There was a crash of lightning and the long roll of thunder, reverberating through the pass and side draws. Water, she could hear, was cascading down the little stream and over the bank below. The horses of the men Joyce had shot stampeded in the storm, stumbled, being tangled in the reins, then went on. Joyce groaned and his eyes came open, hardly showing in the gloom of the cabin's interior.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"On the bunk. I got you there somehow. You are badly hurt."

"I know that," he said. "You must ride."

"I couldn't and leave you like this."

"Yardlow will come."

"Let him; I shan't go with him unless he convinces me that your story is a lie."

"You don't know Yardlow—ride!" And then he was unconscious again.

He muttered. She never had attended a man wounded by a gun shot before. She had heard of the fever that comes from bad wounds and its rapid progress. She heard him muttering.

She tore open his shirt and found a wound—through the right lung. She knew the wound was dangerous—almost sure to be fatal. She had little experience to guide her, none of the sort she really needed. But she did one thing—she found a pannikin of former days, made sure it was clean, and then held it under the overhang of the roof in front till it was full of cool, clean water. With this she bathed the wound, holding her cold, wet handkerchief to it.

In working about in his delirium the man got far down in the bunk, and to get him up she slipped one hand under his back, to get leverage. She drew her hand out—wet, red.

"He is bleeding from the back, too," she thought.

She was appalled, when she got him moved to one side, to see the big red stain on the blankets. She worked him over on his face with feverish anxiety. She cut away the shirt, baring the back with its corded muscles now bunched in pain and delirium. She tore a piece from her skirt and made a rude compress, sopping it with cold water.

After a time the bleeding ceased. The cold had made the wound pucker and the blood coagulate.

Now he rolled over onto his back again and she had not strength to stop him. His fever mounted and mounted. She went for water, time and time again. She lost track of time, in fact. The light failed altogether; she knew it was night. The storm had passed. The moon came out, lighting the pass. Some of its light came in at the door that she had left open that the cooler air might enter and aid her fight against the mounting fever.

He babbled now, of home and mother and sister. He babbled of stampedes, gun fights for the right, the rustlers—and then of Harrison's Bend and her.

"Don't let that beast Yardlow have her," he moaned. "He'll come—he'll come."

He half raised up in the bed, and said solemnly: "He's comin'; I hear him ridin', ridin'—he'll come."

Then he fell back, weak, coughing.

Through the night hours she fought the fever with only cold water to aid her. When the rain ceased its drip from the roof edge, she went out to the brooklet that now roared from the side draw—a lusty young creek in volume.

She did not sleep. She had not eaten in almost twenty-four hours. She did not sense fatigue.

Dawn found her still nursing him anxiously, with the fever terribly high.

The day turned lowery again and promised more rain. The pass was

gloomy. She went to the rear door in an interval when Joyce was quiet from exhaustion and looked for the horses. They were gone. They had broken away during the night. Pinto's saddle lay where he had bucked it clear; Pepper, too, had disappeared. Joyce had merely tied them when they had first come to the cabin, without completely unsaddling, beyond taking off the blanket roll behind the cantle of his own saddle.

The light grew a little stronger. He called wildly for water. She gave him some.

Suddenly he drew himself up on one elbow and pointed to the open door.

"Shut it; Yardlow! I hear him riding with his men—shut it."

"Yes," she agreed, to soothe him, and went to shut the door. As she did so she heard him gasp and, letting the bar fall in its place, she leaped to the bunk. He had gone limp and his face was ghastly. He was muttering:

"My guns; put them under my haid—put them under my haid."

To humor him, she got his guns that she had laid, with his belt, in a corner. She slipped one of them under his head, under a roll of the blanket she had formed into a pillow. He exhaled, gasped, relaxed—was completely limp. She put her ear to his chest and listened. Her ears could detect no sound!

Now, outside she heard voices, several voices—then suddenly the voice of Yardlow.

"Hamer, Allen, an' Billson ought t' be here, or down in the ranches at the foot of this pass. There's two down there, off t' the right. You'll see the trail. That old sheep-herder's hut looks deserted. They ain't been here, for there's no sign."

"But that rain'd wash it out," some one objected.

"We lost Joyce an' that girl when we ran into that sheep-herder's trace, with all those woolies walking over it," Yardlow complained.

"An' what was left the storm blotted," a man said.

Joyce, in the bunk, was silent now. She hardly dared to look at the man, so ghastly white was his face.

"You ride on; I'll wait in the cabin. Joyce'd never stop after he got this far. Go to one of those ranches an' get grub and what news you can. I'm dead done up. If Joyce got into his own range he'll show up at home soon. We'll get him, somehow."

"We better all ride up t' that cabin an' look her over," some one suggested.

"No; they'd not stop here; they'd keep right on over after they got this far. They're either behind us or down in the lower lands. If you find Hamer, send him up; he's the best trailer in these parts."

"Wish we knew who that sheepman was that kept his woolies onto Joyce's sign so long beyond the pass."

"We'll find out who it was some day. We didn't have time t' ride off side an' locate him yesterday."

They debated all possibilities. Yardlow kept to his point—that they should ride to the foot of the pass. Clarice had time to reflect that the body of Sid Allen was concealed by the cabin; the other two bodies were before the cabin, so placed that the men in the pass could not see them, because of the bulge of the little bench on which the cabin stood. If Yardlow came over the bulge, he would see them at once. And he would call to them and they would come, and then——

"I watched all last night, while you-all slept," Yardlow was saying. "You can travel t' the foot of the pass and get news of Hamer, Billson, and Sid Allen. I'll go into the cabin and sleep."

"But that door, bein' shut, looks bad to me," a man objected. "If it was open, it would be more nacheral."

"Aw, the storm probably sucked it shet," Yardlow said. The man was argumentative, sullen, from long endur-

ance of the toils of the trail and lack of sleep. "Ride, now. I'll be right here when you come back, or if you get news that warrants, ride on an' send a man back with grub and tobacco for me. I'm about daid for a smoke."

She watched them, through the chink in the wall. They rode away, and Yardlow turned toward the cabin. One of them called when they were down the trail a bit, and he turned to answer. By the time they had made him hear, they had all but dropped over a ridge in the pass trail. When he turned to face the cabin again, they were gone.

Clarice Golden formed her resolution quickly. She acted without thinking of the outcome. She stepped onto the sill of the cabin, anxious only to keep him out of it by any means.

"Clarice!" Yardlow fairly shouted.

"Yes," she answered steadily, advancing toward him. She stepped over the dead men and slid down the dip from bench to pass level.

"Are you all right?" he demanded, swinging down and running toward her.

"Yes," she replied as steadily as she could. She knew her hair was disheveled, her dress rumpled, her eyes burning and sunken.

"And alone?" he asked fiercely.

"Yes," she said again, trying to speak convincingly.

He stared at her. "And Joyce?"

"Oh, Joyce!" She unwittingly made a gesture of disdain that brought one of her palms upward. She realized her error too late. He grasped her wrist and stared at her hand.

"Blood! Are you hurt?"

"Yes—a little cut—that bled—just a moment ago."

He laughed. "It's old, hardened blood. Show me the wound."

She shrank away from his gaze. His eyes blazed now with a mounting hatred. He shoved past her and leaped onto the bench before the cabin. He saw the two dead men.

"There's been a fight. Joyce! Where is he?"

"He's—oh, I'll go back to the Bend with you. Take me away out of this horrible place. I'll go back——"

She was before him. He shoved her aside.

"A man might think he was inside and you were trying to save him—to save the man that stole you like an Indian squaw, away from your own affianced husband. Let me past——"

"No; don't go in there," she said wildly. "Take me back to the Bend—don't go in——"

A gun flashed into line in his right hand. He threw her aside ruthlessly, and she fell heavily. He leaped into the cabin. She was at his side like a flash—before him.

His eyes were unable to take in details at once in that dim interior. She could hear his horse stamping and snorting in the pass below. She could hear the wind soughing in the trees. Then he sought to thrust her aside again.

"The bunk—what's in it?" and he tried to use his gun. She got hold of his wrist and fought him.

"I believe you're tryin' t' save him," he snarled out. She held to him with desperate courage.

In his rage he swung at her viciously with his left fist, and caught her a glancing blow on the temple. She crumpled down, raking his face with her fingers as she fell. Blinded for the moment, he bent over and began to beat her with his balled fist, despite her moans.

Then his brain cleared and he pulled himself erect.

"If Joyce is in here wounded, he may have enough sand t' shoot yet."

His eyes were used to the darkness now. He probed the corners of the room, was aware of the place where the bunk was, and stared.

A spectral shape reared itself on the

bunk; flame leaped from the bed. Yardlow plunged forward, a hole through his forehead.

"Joyce! Joyce!" the girl called. She came erect unsteadily and stepped over the body of Yardlow to the side of the bunk.

"Yardlow—I saw you; I saw you," Bud was raving. "I said you'd come—ah-h-h-h-hhh!"

He went limp again.

She put her hand on his brow. It was cold. The fever had broken!

Her brain worked fast. She knew they must go before Yardlow's men returned. She heard a nicker from Yardlow's horse and then Pepper answered and she could hear him off in the brush behind the cabin. She went to the back door. Pepper, his saddle still on, although she could see it was loose, was coming toward the cabin. The pinto was not to be seen.

Yardlow's horse began to work his way down the trail. She feared to try to catch him up, as he was strange to her and high spirited.

Pepper let her come to him and cinch the saddle. She tied the broken bridle reins together and tied the horse to the corner of the cabin, where a log projected from the wall. Then she went to the bunk side again.

Joyce, limp and white, did not move. She got her mouth to his ear and spoke.

"Joyce! Are you alive?"

His voice was weak, but he gave an affirmative answer.

"Do you know what has happened?"

"No, hardly. I dreamed I shot it out with Yardlow."

"You did. You killed him. We must go before his men come back."

"Go—how?"

"If I hold you up, can you ride?"

"Get me in a saddle and I'll make the grade."

"I can walk beside you and support you."

"Where we ridin' to?" he asked, very weak now.

"Yardlow's men rode to the ranches below for news. Can we pass them?"

"Yes; there's side trails below the foot of the pass. Get me onto the aidge of the bench before the cabin, so that I can fall onto Pepper's back. Is he o. k.?"

"Yes, but pinto's gone."

"He'll go back t' the Bend. Pepper wouldn't leave me."

Then he seemed to faint again. After a moment he whispered: "Hurry! We must hurry!"

She got the horse before the cabin, fighting his inclination to dance at the sight of the dead men. She had to take him down the bank before he ceased to snort at them and prance. Then she left him and went to the bunk.

"Joyce; can you help me?" she asked, her soul in the phrase.

"I'll—make—the—grade——" he got out gaspingly.

"You must tell me what to do."

"Get me up and let me sag onto you. No use taking my guns. I cain't stand their weight."

"I'll take them."

"No, you'd not use them right; you might harm yourself. We're down t' cases; the Big Square Dealer's got t' settle this. Help me up."

She got behind him, braced him upright, eased him off the bunk, and then he sagged against her. Together they went to the door, and out. He was a dead weight on her during the walk to the horse and managed to fall forward into the saddle, getting hold of the horn with a viselike grip. Pepper danced, but steadied as he spoke a curt word or two, with a supreme effort, in his old-time manner. Then he coughed terribly and the girl, beside the horse, steadied him by holding his leg and using it to lever him into balance as he swayed.

Thus they went down the trail, to the foot of the pass. There she asked him

for direction, and he indicated a dim trace that, he said, went to a mining claim where some men he knew were at work.

At dusk they came to the claim, and Joyce's friends took them in. Joyce was now in a state of complete collapse. Clarice told her story, and the miners assured her that they would take care of Joyce and get him down into the valley to his home.

Then the world went black before her and she forgot.

The miners sent a scouting party back to the sheep-herder's cabin. There they found Hamer, just alive. The old gunman, faced with death, told, before he died, a story that made it clear that Hamer, Billson, and Sid Allen had attacked Joyce at the orders of Yardlow. As Clarice Golden was able to testify that Joyce's killing of Yardlow was in self-defense and in extremity, when he was all but too weak to defend himself, he was cleared of all charges in connection with the killings.

Three weeks later, able to go to court and face the charge laid by Yardlow, of kidnaping, Bud Joyce, surrounded by his friends, faced Yardlow's friends in the county court at Antelope Crossing. A score of punchers from the Bear Valley range sat on the same side of the courtroom as the accused, and the Benders, frightened, were quiet as Joyce arose and pleaded "not guilty." The attorney for the people started the case by calling the only witness possible to call, Clarice Golden, in whose name the charge had been laid. Clarice, demure and blushing, took the stand and, in answer to the first question asked her, said firmly:

"I refuse to testify. I never laid this charge, and I repudiate it. Mr. Joyce and I are good friends, and that is all I have to say."

"That being so, the court dismisses the complaint," Judge Peterson ruled. Bud would have been carried out on the shoulders of cheering range riders, had not Clarice reminded them that his fast-healing wound would not permit such rough usage.

Six months later Bud sat on the corral bars of the home ranch. His mother and sister were under the gallery of the Joyce home, laughing and talking. Down the path toward the corral came Clarice Golden, her sunny head gilded by the last rays of the setting sun. Pepper was begging for tobacco, as usual.

"Clara," Bud said, as he slid to the ground and got an arm about her, "it's long enough for me t' wait, ain't it?"

"Bud—you've been good, and I've had such a good time here with your mother and people. I've learned to love the West, and I think I can make a wife that a Western man would respect and keep on loving."

"But who'll the Western man be?" he asked, tilting her chin back so that he could look into the depths of her calm blue eyes.

"Who *would* he be, Bud?"

Joyce leaned forward and kissed her. Pepper's soft muzzle came to caress them. Bud spoke with mock harshness:

"Old butter-insky, you; always in where you're not wanted. Pie eater; you got me into this, dog-gone your ornery low-flung hide!"

Pepper? He just backed off and nickered his deep, chesty, love note while Clarice, her head on the breast of the homely, bow-legged puncher, sighed with deep, pure content.

# A Cowgirl's Pal

By Carolyn Winters

HE knew he was old and needed rest,
Had served his time, and done his best,
And he liked this field of soft green grass
Where all his dreams had come to pass;
The room, the stream, the fresh sweet hay,
Not a thing to do through all the day,
But his heart was sick with a hungry pain
To be at home with the folks again,
With the girl who murmured "Dandy Jim,"
As she rubbed his nose, and played with him.

He had thought he would like to be pensioned off,
Not knowing the price, the dreadful cost,
Till he heard her lonely, sorrowing cry,
"Good-by, dear Jim—old horse—good-by."
And saw her bravely standing there,
Holding his head, while he sniffed her hair.
A year had gone without her face,
Since she left him in this Eden place,
But not one day of joy or peace
Had brought his loneliness surcease.

So he stood alone at close of day,
Ears attuned to the far-away,
Restlessly pawing the fragrant ground,
Keenly alert to every sound;
He stood till the stars in the sky were bright,
Then made a leap into the night,
Cleared the bars and sped away,
Made fifty miles by break of day;
Such joy when near his home again
His heart forgot its hungry pain.
He nickered at the old front gate.
She heard that call—she didn't wait,
And now he stands in the old board stall
And whinnies back to her tender call.

# The Trip They'd Never Forget

By

## Reginald C. Barker

*Author of "Grizzly Gallagher, Santa Claus," etc.*

ACROSS the yellow flame of a camp fire, Theophilus James Norton made it perfectly plain to his guide that it had cost him a great deal of money to come to the Salmon River Mountains of Idaho in search of a grizzly.

"Such being the case," he concluded, "I want you to understand, Danvers, that under no circumstances whatever are you to deprive me of the joy of the kill. Under no circumstances whatever are you to shoot at a bear while in my employ as a guide."

"Not even if your life is in danger?" asked Bill Danvers.

"There never will be any danger to me," asserted the big-paunched, flabby-muscled man in the hundred-dollar hunting suit. "I have with me one of the most powerful express rifles manufactured, with interchangeable barrels of different calibers. It can send a steel-jacketed bullet through forty-seven pine boards, each one inch in thickness."

"Pine boards ain't a charging grizzly," intimated Bill Danvers, "but it's all right with me; you're the boss. All I got to say it, that if we happen to meet up with Old Three Claw, you'd better shoot straight the first time."

"I've made forty-eight bull's-eyes out of a possible fifty," boasted the rich man, "at a hundred and seventy-five yards."

"There's a pile of difference between shooting at a bull's-eye and killing a bear," said Bill Danvers.

"The only difference that I can see," retorted Norton, "is that a bear is easier to hit."

Then he arose and retired into his tent, where he disrobed, and, after attiring himself in woolen pajamas, crawled into his expensive sleeping bag.

For an hour or more Bill Danvers sat smoking by the fire and gazing reflectively from time to time at the costly outfit of his employer.

There were boxes of canned goods, a case of expensive jellies and jams, a medicine kit, a sack of salt, and a smaller one of arsenic for preservative purposes. Several sacks of flour, a side or two of bacon, and a sack of sugar lay piled beneath a tarpaulin. And with him the rich man had brought the latest things in camp furniture. A folding table and chair, a hammock to recline in when he didn't feel like hunting, a grill to cook on, a complete set of shining aluminum dishes, and many other

articles which were new and strange to the guide.

Over a hundred miles of mountain trails Bill Danvers had packed the outfit on horses into the almost inaccessible Thunder Mountain country, where for years Old Three Claw, the grizzly, had defied both hunters and trappers.

"By whiskers," ran the guide's thoughts, "if anything happened to Norton, I'd fall heir to this outfit."

An idle thought. It was very unlikely that anything would happen to the rich man, for Bill Danvers was one of the most competent guides in the Salmon River Mountains.

"Too bad the fellow can't forget his money for a while," ran on the thoughts of Bill Danvers, "and be sociable." But it was clearly a case with Theophilus Norton of "big me and little you."

The idea! Telling a man "under no circumstances are you to take a shot at a bear while in my employ."

"By whiskers!" Bill Danvers hoped that they would run onto Old Three Claw, the grizzly, and that Norton would get tangled up with him.

"Under no circumstances——" Again the thought intruded itself, and with it came another.

Suppose the bear should kill Norton? How easily it could happen. Bill Danvers tried to thrust the thought aside, but in vain—for if, for instance, Norton's rifle jammed, or—or burst!

For Bill Danvers was not familiar enough with the mechanism of an express rifle to know just what would be necessary to make it jam; but, by the three front teeth missing from his mouth, he knew what sometimes caused a rifle to burst.

Slowly he turned his head and listened intently; then, without a sound, he arose to his feet and, stealing over to Norton't tent, listened again.

"Phew, phe-e-ew." It was the asthmatic noise many fat men make when asleep.

Carefully Bill Danvers pushed aside the flap of the tent and stole in; easily he lifted the yellow leather case which contained the rich man's rifle, and with it stole back to the fire.

Then he started nervously, for from out the shadowed pines came the call of a great horend owl.

Seventy miles from where they were camped, Bill Danvers' wife was waiting on their mountain homestead. Wouldn't her eyes shine if she heard that Bill had fallen heir to all that expensive camp outfit—the aluminum cooking outfit? Bess had always wanted aluminum. Bill remembered how she had pointed out one in a catalogue they had received from an Eastern mail-order house.

A charging grizzly, a bursting rifle barrel! There was not one chance in the world of ever being found out. "Another hunter falls before the avenging fury of the Thunder Mountain Terror," the headlines in the *Idaho Sentinel* would read. And Bill Danvers would be eulogized for bringing the rich man's body back across a hundred miles of trails. How could any one blame *him* for a bursting rifle barrel?

Slowly Bill Danvers slid the express rifle out of its case, and a silver moonbeam gleamed on its barrel as he laid it across his knees. Was it loaded? Being unfamiliar with the mechanism, he was afraid to open the breach and find out. It didn't make any difference, anyhow. Laying down the rifle he stole down to the creek and scooped up a handful of let clay, and with it in his hands he returned to the fire.

For ten minutes he sat there molding the clay into round little pellets. Then, one by one, he dropped them into the barrel of Norton's express, and with his cleaning rod tamped them tight. Afterward he carefully polished the rifle to remove all signs of the yellow clay, and, sliding it back into its case,

he stole back with it into the tent where Norton lay noisily breathing.

Returning to the creek, Bill Danvers washed his hands, after which he filled his pipe and sat staring into the fire until he knew by the stars that it was midnight.

"Been up all night?" was the greeting of Theophilus Norton, when in the chill air of early morning in the high altitudes, he emerged from his tent and stood rubbing his hands together before the fire over which his guide was cooking breakfast.

"Best time to hunt is in the early morning," said Bill Danvers.

"Ugh!" shivered Norton. "I'm cold. Got any hot water?"

Bill Danvers' expression was contemptuous as he set a kettle of water on the fire. "Be warm in a few minutes," said he. "Nice morning, ain't it?"

The rich man removed the kettle of hot water from the fire, poured it into a rubber wash pan, and a cloud of white steam rose into the clear, cold air.

"Better open one of those cans of red-currant jelly," he said. "I like it on my hot cakes."

Watching him gorge his breakfast, Bill Danvers wondered why Norton had come to the mountains. Surely he couldn't be enjoying himself in company with a man he so evidently deemed his inferior. For Bill thought that the rich man did not consider him as worthy of any consideration at all; he was just a hill-billy; a little more intelligent than his fellow hill-billies, perhaps, and therefore worth ten dollars a day.

All rich men were not like that, as Bill Danvers well knew; in fact Norton was a very great exception to the usual run of sportsmen he had guided. Most of them were good scouts and ready and willing to leave their city weaknesses in the cities whence they came.

There they sat, Norton and his guide; separated by only a camp fire, yet in breeding, training, and nature as far apart as the poles. Among his associates in the city Norton was known as a good business man, and in society he had the name of being a suave-mannered gentleman of polished manners, considerate, thoughtful, and kind.

Bill Danvers didn't know anything about that, though, and had he been told so, probably he wouldn't have believed it. How could he have believed it, of a man who spoke only to give him an order or to find fault with something he had done?

Not for a moment did Bill Danvers dream, nor would he have believed that Norton kept silent because he just didn't know what to say; that with all his wealth the man was suffering from a complex which showed him his own inferiority to the man who was facing him across the fire. What the city was to Norton, so were the mountains to Bill Danvers.

Had Bill Danvers been suddenly transported to a drawing-room of New York or Chicago, his feelings would have been very similar to those of the man who sat eating his breakfast. Not knowing whether he was saying the right thing at the right time, he would have done as Norton was doing; taken refuge in silence.

To Norton the killing of a grizzly meant the realization of his boyhood's dream—a dream that all his money so far had failed to make true. Many a time in fancy he had seen himself pouring lead into a charging monster whose size and weight should exceed that of the largest grizzly ever killed. Many a time in his club in New York had he listened with envy at the hunting yarns of other men. Well, let them wait; he'd show them; some day he'd kill a grizzly bear, the like of which had never been seen.

So once each year for many years Theophilus Norton had spent a thousand dollars or so hunting for the bear that was to make him famous as a big-game

hunter. But although he had killed many small black bears and a couple of brown ones, never yet had he set eyes on a silver-tip grizzly.

Then he found the newspaper item that told of the killing of two sheepherders by old "Three Claw, the terror of Thunder Mountain." A wire to Thunder City had brought confirmation of the news, and five days later Theophilus Norton hired Bill Danvers and his outfit.

Sitting there gorging his hot cakes and bacon, the rich man wondered whether he had been wise in his choice of a guide. Why, he wondered, he did not know; yet it seemed to him that across the fire, invisible antennæ had established communication between his highly sensitized mind and that of the evidently dull-witted mountaineer facing him. Just what the nerve vibrations meant, Norton could not tell, but over him there hung a sense of imminent danger; terrible, appalling.

Not by the quiver of a muscle did Norton betray the fact that he suspected his guide; a postgraduate in the school of big business, he had learned how to control his emotions, and his face was masklike in its immobility as he arose to his feet.

"As I am going to do all the shooting, Danvers," he said, "it won't be a bit necessary for you to carry your rifle."

Bill Danvers raised his head, and his somber eyes swept the rich man's poker face; then they fell before the authority in the hard gray stare.

"All right," he said. "You're the boss."

Expecting rebellion, for a moment Norton was thrown off his guard by the man's prompt acquiescence, and in a dim way he realized that to the mountaineer his order must have been a crowning insult, intimating as it did a distrust that Bill Danvers would fail to keep the promise he had given that "under no circumstances whatever" was he to shoot at a bear.

"You see," he explained, "it means a lot to me to get that grizzly; so much in fact that I'll add a hundred-dollar bonus to your wages the day we stretch his hide."

Ignoring both the implied apology and the offer, Bill Danvers arose to his feet and stuffed his pipe into his pocket. "Let's go," he said, "before the sun gets any higher."

"Have a cigar?" Norton felt that he simply must do something to atone for what he had said.

"If you aim to get a bear," said the guide, waving away the proffered cigar case, "you'd better not smoke. They don't like the smell of tobacco."

Five miles from camp Bill Danvers stopped on the knifelife edge of a thousand-foot hogback and pointed downward at a tiny lake that, surrounded on all sides by dark-foliaged white firs, lay like a jewel reflecting the turquoise of the sky.

"Take a look down there with your glasses," he said quietly.

Norton adjusted the binoculars to the range, then he sharply caught his breath, for as the lake leaped up to meet him, he thought he caught a momentary glimpse of something alive, something huge that with a shambling gait disappeared into the timber below.

"I think—I think——" he stammered. Why the devil didn't his heart quit acting so funny? "I saw a grizzly!"

"I wouldn't wonder," said Bill Danvers, as he shifted his quid from one cheek to the other. "I wouldn't wonder if you did. Let's go down and see if we can find his tracks."

A blue grouse rose from Norton's feet and sailed away across the lake as he picked his way down among the huge gray granite boulders that strewed the side of the mountain, and high in the blue above the water a dark speck showed where an eagle soared. But

Norton didn't hear the whir of grouse's wings, didn't see the eagle; in his mind he was sitting in front of a big fireplace at his club, telling the story of how he had killed the "Terror of Thunder Mountain."

Bill Danvers shifted his quid to his other cheek, looked at the plugged rifle barrel lying so easily on Norton's shoulder, and thought of the rich man's camp outfit and smiled.

"Wind's in our favor," he said. "If that *was* a bear you saw, we ought to come up with him in an hour."

All unconscious that he had been seen, a mile away Old Three Claw stopped and raised his huge head with its silver-gray muzzle, for the wind that was blowing in his face was coming directly from the direction of Norton's camp, and with it came the scent of bacon.

For a moment only did the huge grizzly stand there sniffing; then, without a backward glance he broke into a shambling lope that carried him with surprising speed in the direction of Norton's camp.

"Saska Lake," grunted Bill Danvers in reply to a query from Norton. "No, don't know what it means—Indian name, I reck'n. Pretty, ain't it?"

"Magnificent!" enthused Norton. Stopping for a moment he gazed at the cathedral-like peaks sentineling Saska Lake on three sides; at the dark green virgin forest stretching away on the fourth.

From a red willow growing in the lush grass that reached from the edge of the forest almost to the water, the guide plucked a tuft of silky white hair and held it out to Norton.

"Mountain goat hair," he explained.

"I thought they never left the peaks," said Norton.

"Most folks think so," stated Bill Danvers, "but they're mistaken. I've seen as many as a dozen goats here at one time. That's what brings the grizzlies——" He stopped abruptly and stooped over. "There's the track of Old Three Claw," he said. "Must have been him you saw."

Norton tried to speak, but the words stuck in his throat, and it seemed to him that a tiny little chill raced up his spine. Slowly he slid the rifle from his shoulder to the ground, and, holding it by the barrel with one hand, unconsciously let his weight rest on the gun, until with a squashy sound the beautiful English walnut stock sank deep into the wet soil.

"Got a tape with you?" asked Danvers.

Mechanically Norton handed the guide his silver-cased pocket tape, but he spoke no word; just stood staring at a huge track in the mud from which water was still oozing.

"Fourteen and three quarter inches," said Bill Danvers. Then he straightened up and released the catch of the tape, and it snapped back on its reel with a hissing sound.

"See?" The guide pointed at one of the huge tracks. "That's what gave Three Claw his name. He left the two largest claws of his right forefoot in one of Martin Johnson's traps."

"How—how large were they?" It seemed to cost Norton an unusual effort to speak. He wondered whether his guide guessed how fast his heart was pumping.

"Seems like I heard old Martin say they were five and a quarter inches," replied Bill Danvers, "but I ain't sure."

"Danvers?" And the mountaineer started nervously at the harsh note in Norton's voice that told of strained nerves. "Did you ever see Three Claw? At close quarters, I mean?"

"Uh-uh," replied the guide.

"How much will he weigh?"

"Maybe twelve hundred," replied Danvers. "Certainly not less than a thousand."

"Not less than a thousand!" Norton

was talking to himself now. The record weight of a grizzly killed by a member of his club was eight hundred and sixty-three pounds.

"I'll make that bonus five hundred dollars, Danvers," he said, "if I shoot Three Claw myself, and he weighs more than a thousand pounds.

Five hundred dollars plus his wages. Eight hundred dollars in all!

Through a sudden mist Bill Danvers stared across the lake; then it cleared, and for a moment his gaze rested on the rifle with its beautiful English walnut stock now hidden by the mud that was slowly creeping over the breech.

Eight hundred dollars! And he had never known, never dreamed that he could get it honestly. Now it was too late! Too late. For the barrel of Norton's rifle was plugged with clay.

For a moment Bill Danvers wondered whether he had better make a clean breast of what he had done, but the thought was checkmated by another. Theophilus Norton was a rich man, and as such he would not hesitate to send a poor man to the penitentiary. It was not like a rich man to forgive.

Eight hundred dollars Norton offered for the skin of old Three Claw—yet Bill Danvers would have murdered him for the sake of his camp outfit, worth perhaps half as much. And now there seemed to be no way in which the guide could obtain the offered bonus. No way unless, unless for a short time he could get possession of Norton's rifle. But how could he do that, since Norton had expressly forbidden him to carry a rifle, or to shoot at a bear under any circumstance whatever. Yet it was the only way. Somehow or other he must get hold of that rifle and clean the plugged barrel.

He was recalled to his immediate surroundings by an ugly, sucking sound made by Norton pulling the rifle out of the mud.

"By whiskers!" exclaimed the guide with sudden relief. For at the sight of the slimy black mud clinging to the stock and breech of the gun, a thought had come to him. "I'll bet you've gone and filled the breech of your gun with mud, Mr. Norton. Better let me take it into camp and clean it for you. I can take a short cut and be back here in an hour and a half."

Norton looked curiously at the guide. Used to judging men, he thought he detected a hidden meaning in the words of the mountaineer. Or rather it seemed to him that in Bill Danvers' voice there was a tremor that shouldn't have been there.

"It won't be necessary," he said. "The breech of my rifle is both water and dirt proof."

And as Bill Danvers watched him, he stepped into the water at the edge of Saska Lake and calmly washed the mud off of the stock and the breech. Then, to make sure that the mechanism was in working order, he ejected the cartridge and threw another into the chamber.

"Which way now?" he asked.

Without a glance or a word Bill Danvers turned from the lake and led the way into the timber. Now and again he stopped and pointed to where a great claw had left its mark on a rotten log, or where water still oozed from huge tracks in some very soft patch of ground.

A mile from the lake the guide stopped, swung around, and faced Norton.

"I can't figure it out," he said. "The way the wind is blowing that bear can't possibly have caught our scent, yet he's traveling straight away from us and so fast that there ain't one chance in a thousand that we'll catch up with him. If I didn't know for sure that a grizzly ain't afraid of anything in the mountains, I'd say that Old Three Claw was scared."

"Perhaps," suggested Norton, "he

saw us as we came down the mountain on the other side of Saska Lake."

"No danger," scoffed Bill Danvers. "There's not a bear in the mountains that could see that far."

"What'll we do then?" asked Norton.

"Can't do anything but keep on his trail," replied Bill Danvers. "Maybe he'll slow up after a while." But in his heart he was devoutly hoping that Old Three Claw wouldn't, at least not until he had had a chance to clean that plugged rifle barrel.

Old Three Claw had not slowed up. Through thickets of white fir, over ridges of alpine pine, across swales of golden-leaved quaking aspens, straight as a die the great tracks led in the direction of Norton's camp.

And little by little Danvers read the story of that definite trail. By broken branch, by torn log, by deep footprint in the mud, and lastly by an odor that came drifting to his nostrils on the wings of the keen wind—an odor of bacon rinds sizzling in the still hot ashes of a camp fire; by these things did the mountaineer solve the mystery of the grizzly's haste.

"By whiskers!" he exclaimed. "Old Three Claw has gone to raid our camp," and he glanced at the plugged rifle.

Gone to raid their camp! A grizzly raiding a camp in the mountains? To Norton a thrill that was partly anticipation and partly fear, but mostly nervousness, dropped like an icicle down his spine. What would they say, those fellow club men of his, when before the cheerful crackle of a wood fire in the big fireplace they sipped their toddies and listened to him as with all the power of his oratory he told them of the slaying of the "Terror of Thunder Mountain?"

For the third time since leaving Saska Lake, Bill Danvers stopped and faced his employer.

"Suppose," he said, "that you should miss? Your hands are shaking now."

Norton looked down at the huge tracks of the bear; then he looked at his hands. White knuckles of the one grasping the rifle testified to the nervousness of his grip. Holding the other hand out, he watched it shaking like the leaf of an aspen in the breeze, and not all the strength of his will power could make it still.

Again his eyes dropped to the huge tracks at his feet; and dimly he could picture the enormous size of the monster who had left them there. Suppose he should miss? Suppose the grizzly should charge? The thought was not reassuring.

After all, what did it matter who killed the bear? Back at his club none would know the difference. How did he know for sure that any of the trophies on the walls had been killed by their present owners. That was merely conjecture.

"Where did you leave your rifle?" he asked.

"Leaning against a tree in camp," replied Danvers. "But you told me not to shoot at a bear under any circumstances whatever."

Again Norton looked at the tracks of the grizzly. "Do you think there is any danger that I'd fail to stop him?" he asked.

"Danger?" repeated the guide with an intensity in his voice that Norton noticed but, of course, failed to fathom. "Danger! Mr. Norton, when you face Old Three Claw with that rifle you'll be very near death."

Melodrama was Norton's first thought. Yet it could not be, for as he bent a piercing gaze on the guide's face, he recognized fear itself lurking in the black eyes, deep-set in the leathery face.

"I'll be darned if he isn't scared to death himself," thought Norton. "Maybe there *is* danger of that brute charging, and, after all, I ought to give Danvers a chance.

"I'll make a bargain with you," he

said aloud. "Maybe I was a little hasty in ordering you not to carry your rifle. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. If we come up with the grizzly when we get to camp, you give me the first shot. If I fail to stop him, you can grab your rifle and turn loose, and if between us we get him, I'll pay you the bonus just the same."

Give Norton the first shot? Not if Bill Danvers knew it. Not when the first pull at the trigger might cause the plugged barrel to burst and blow the face off the man who was to pay him eight hundred dollars. Somehow he must obtain possession of the plugged rifle. But how?

Certainly, Bill Danvers told himself, he had misjudged his man. For it seemed that with all his wealth Norton was willing to do the square thing. Five hundred dollars bonus plus his wages would bring Bill Danvers more money than he had seen at one time in all his life.

Suppose he was to tell Norton all? No, it would be taking too much of a chance; for even though by so doing he would save his employer's life, Norton would not be likely to pay that bonus. And how Bill Danvers needed that extra five hundred dollars!

Even had Danvers not tampered with the rifle he doubted very much whether Norton's nerve wouldn't fail him in a crisis, for even now, standing there looking at the track of the big grizzly, the rifle was shaking in the man's hands, and Bill Danvers noticed that beads of perspiration were standing out on his forehead and that his eyes wore a strained look. A little more excitement and Theophilus Norton's nerves would give way—Bill Danvers had seen cases of "buck fever" before—and he might do anything.

"Well?" said Norton. Wasn't the man ever going to reply to his proposition?

"If you don't get the grizzly with your first shot," said Bill Danvers deliberately, "he'll get *you.*"

The shot told, as the mountaineer had intended it to do, for as he stole through the last half mile of woods that lay between them and their camp, behind him he could hear the stertorous breathing that advertised Norton's breaking nerve.

Would the grizzly be there? If so, would Norton's nerve break entirely? Would he fling the rifle away and run and run and run as often Bill Danvers had seen a tenderfoot run? Or would he attempt to fire? No, not that. Before he would allow his employer to press that fateful trigger, Bill Danvers made up his mind to wrest the plugged rifle from his hands.

A screen of second-growth pines lay between them and their camp, a living screen fifty feet in width and dense as bright green velvet. Bill Danvers stopped, looked back, raised his hand for silence, and whispered:

"Listen."

Left hand gripping his rifle, right hand clutched to his thumping heart, strained eyes in white, fat face, Norton stooped forward listening.

Slam, tinkle, tinkle, slam! Sounds that were like a bunch of boys playing shinny with an empty tin can!

Bill Danvers stepped back a pace and motioned Norton to take the lead.

"It's a grizzly," he whispered, "raiding the camp."

Would Norton's nerve collapse at the sight of the bear? Would he fling his rifle away, or would Bill Danvers be compelled to wrest it from his hands? He didn't know, but it was his only chance to get hold of the plugged rifle. He was playing his last hand.

"Get him," he whispered, "with your first shot, or he'll get you."

Bill Danvers was right at Norton's heels when they reached the edge of the screening pines.

The tent was still as they had left it, but in front of it the ground was white,

white as snow with flour and sugar and salt from ripped sacks. Here and there the scattered flour was red with streaks of jelly and jam from shattered jars, the glass of which scintillated beneath the sun. And in the middle of the wreckage stood a huge bear all whitened with flour and with his face smeared with bacon grease and jam.

For a moment he stood there all unaware that he was being watched. Then a slight noise attracted his attention, and he arose upon his haunches until the top of his head was more than eight feet from the ground, and his great forearms—all sticky with a mixture of flour, sugar, jelly, bacon grease and jam dropped in front of his massive chest.

Speechless with excitement and forgetting that he held a rifle, Norton watched the grizzly, and narrowly Bill Danvers watched both—and his own rifle which he could see still leaning where he had left it. But it was on the *other* side of the bear.

Norton made no effort to shoot, and the big grizzly showed no inclination to charge—he had sampled the arsenic that he had mixed with the flour and sugar—and just sat reared on his haunches with his head wobbling to and fro like that of a drunken man. It was a funny sight; so funny that Norton's strained nerves gave way suddenly and he broke into a loud laugh, a hysterical laugh that he could not have checked had he wished. Still laughing, he threw himself to the ground and the plugged rifle slipped from his hand. But he did not notice, he could not notice, for he was doubled up with helpless laughter.

Dropping to his feet the big grizzly stood for a moment with a puzzled expression on his face. Something, he thought, was as it should not be. But what? It didn't matter anyhow, he wasn't feeling very well, rather wished he hadn't eaten so much—what did he know of arsenic? Guessed he'd get out of there while the going was good—go down to the creek and get a drink—maybe he'd feel better.

Turning, he shambled across the scattered flour, stopping at the edge of the pines for one last look.

In that moment Bill Danvers ran across to his rifle, seized it, and planted a bullet between Old Three Claw's eyes. Silence then, and the sound of Norton laughing.

In his hysterical laughter he rolled some distance from his rifle, nor did he seem to notice when Bill Danvers picked it up and strode in the direction of the creek.

It is not very easy to clean tamped clay out of a rifle barrel, even by using plenty of water and a brass cleaning rod. It took Bill Danvers the better part of an hour, during which, every once in a while he heard Norton's laugh. But when Danvers returned to the camp, the rich man had fallen into a sleep of exhaustion. Quietly the guide laid the rifle where he had found it.

"Funniest thing I ever saw in my life, Bill," said Norton when Danvers awakened him. "I couldn't have shot at that bear if my life had depended on it. Wonder if you'd shake hands, Bill? I owe a lot to you."

Bill! Theophilus James Norton, one of the richest men in his state, getting familiar enough to call his guide "Bill!" Funny old world after all!

"Yeh, Norton," agreed Danvers quietly, "it's been a great trip. One, I reck'n, that neither of us will forget."

In complete understanding at last, their hands met across the dead grizzly.

# Stubborn People

By
*Ernest Haycox*

*Author of "A Burnt Creek Yuletide," etc.*

OLD MAN BUD sat on the porch of his Burnt Creek store, watching the shimmering heat waves that rose out of the jack-pine forest and trailed across the small sand-floored clearing. A lazy drone pervaded the air, broken by the snapping of myriad insects and the impalpable, shutterlike beat of the blazing atmosphere.

He had a habit of reflecting on life. Every act in a man's life, he reflected now, was affected by every other act. There was no beginning and no end. Just an everlasting onward march. Take Jim Hunter for example.

Bud's impassive face lightened. "Think of the devil an' he's sure to pop up." From the north leg of the Bend Klamath Highway rode Jim Hunter, a tall and supple fellow who, even in the saddle, seemed unable to bend his shoulders.

"Stubborn as a mule," reflected Bud in admiration. He waited until Hunter had reached the porch and led the horse into an ineffectual patch of shade before vouchsafing welcome. "You'd save a lot of energy, young fella, if you'd just slouch in the saddle when you're ridin'. That's advice from a broken-down cow-puncher. This ain't no parade."

Hunter stepped up on the porch. The effect of his stature was heightened by the way he carried himself and the seasoned leanness of his body. The struggle on homestead land had definitely left its impression. With some men the abrasion of weather and work effects only a general hardening of features. In Jim Hunter it brought out the original tenacity of his nature and left decisive lines on the berry-colored face. A flash of humor widened his eyes.

"There's no use trying to save me trouble, Bud. Takes fire to burn a fool. I need some coffee and beans."

"Huh." The storekeeper hoisted himself from the chair and ambled into the dark building. "There's a letter. Mebbe you'll want it afore the beans."

Hunter took it with unrestrained eagerness. The gravity dropped from him like a mantle. It seemed he could not tear away the envelope quick enough. Bud, sharply watching, saw the young man's eyes race down the written page with actual avidity. But, as quickly did the face turn expressionless again and presently he crumpled the page in his fist, scowling—so bitter and unforgiving a scowl that the storekeeper clucked his tongue and dumped the provisions on the counter softly.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"No! There wasn't anything else,"

muttered Hunter. "There never is." He stared out of the door upon the sun-scorched clearing. His mind was far from Burnt Creek.

"I mean in the line o' grub," added Bud dryly.

That brought the young man back. "You old goat, quit reading my mind."

"I been called a lot of things in my time, but I pause at the term goat," grumbled the storekeeper. "I figger some day I'm agoin' to quit tendin' store fer a bunch of sassy homesteaders. Take your grub and git."

Hunter stalked to the porch, dumped the grub in his saddlebags, and climbed to the saddle.

"If a man was in his right mind, he'd never come to this God-forsaken land."

"Road's plumb open. You ain't tied to that land. If you don't admire it, why'n't you just sashay out?"

"Same reason you've stuck to this dump for fifteen years," retorted Hunter.

The two traded sober glances. Bud nodded. "Guess you're right, son. We're sort of spellbound. Gets in the blood, I reckon."

Hunter turned his horse to the road. In a moment he had disappeared through the jack pines. Bud settled in his chair after securing a fresh cigar and reverted to his original lines of thought. Jim Hunter now had been a homesteader three years and wore the same hard-bitten look that they all carried. It was partly the result of fighting the land. But that wasn't wholly so. Jim had come from Portland with the same tight lips and the same stubborn carriage of body. Three years had done a great deal in seasoning and tempering the body and wearing away all softness. The essentials remained untouched. Regularly he came to Burnt Creek for supplies and mail. Regularly he received a letter in the same feminine handwriting, which he opened always with a brightening of face and crumpled later with a scowl which seemed to cover hurt pride and forlorn hope. Those letters, evidently, demanded something he would not give, for he never sent an answer through Bud's little post office.

The storekeeper reluctantly left the chair and wandered back to his kitchen. The sun blazed up in the sky, intolerably scorching. Bud viewed an empty pitcher and set to work at making a supply of lemonade against the greater heat of the long afternoon. A few beans, some hard bread, and a dish of canned peaches served for dinner. Then, with a fresh cigar and the lemonade at hand, he settled himself in the sultry shade. All things, in Bud's philosophy, came to those who waited—provided the waiting was mixed with a little judicious helping.

But the afternoon was not to be lonely. He had just started on the lemonade when the sputter of the Bend Klamath stage motor reached him. The vehicle swayed out of the forest, climbed the ruts of the road, skidded perilously amid a shower of sand, and brought a boiling radiator nose and nose with the porch. The driver had a passenger this trip. A woman it was, veiled against the dirt and sun. Teddy Hanson climbed away from his wheel and helped her to the porch.

"Aw," he said, "now what's the good of stoppin' at a horrible hole like this, ma'am? Gosh, think how lonely I'll be all the way to Klamath."

"Flattery," said the girl. She drew back the veil and Bud, greatly puzzled by this visit, found himself looking at an extremely pretty mouth and a pair of hazel eyes that could, when they pleased, be very friendly. Some shade of dark hair strayed pleasantly down a white temple. "Is this Mr. Bud?" she asked.

"That's him," growled out the driver. "There's a lot of circum-feerance, you see. He gets it sittin' on the porch of this so-called store."

"I wouldn't listen to such slander,"

replied Bud. "It's the heat makes him that way. But I mistrust you've got to the wrong place. Ain't hardly anything here you could stop off for. It must be Klamath you mean." He could not help noting that it was not the friendly eyes nor the pretty mouth which most attracted him as it was a firm little chin with the dab of a freckle on it, and an Irish nose. "She'll be wantin' her own way," he silently prophesied.

"No," she answered. "It's Burnt Creek."

Teddy Hanson boosted the girl's trunk on the porch, obviously disinclined to go. She settled the matter by paying him. "Thank you." The inflection was as much as a dismissal. Teddy shot a glance of envy toward Bud, and climbed into his seat.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't fix the road in front of your shack," he shouted above the clatter of the engine.

"That sand flee c'n burrow where it won't climb," retorted Bud. A cloud of sand shot from the wheels; when the dust settled, the stage was gone.

"I dunno how that thing sticks together," he said. "It drinks sand an' runs on grasshoppers. They's a hundred dollars' worth of bailin' wire in it." He saw that she had lost spirit and was staring wistfully at the road. "What'd you say you were after, ma'am?"

"They told me in Bend that you'd help me. I—I'm looking for a homestead here."

"A homestead, ma'am?"

"Never mind how I look!" she cried. "And don't try to argue me out of it! I've argued all the way from Portland, and it's settled. If you won't help me, I'll have to get some one else. I want a homestead near Burnt Creek."

"Why near Burnt Creek, ma'am?"

"For—for reasons."

There was metal in her. She wore clothes that stamped her as a refined city woman, and her hands and clear skin were plain enough witnesses that she had never trafficked much with spade and bucket. Still, Bud did not make the mistake of arguing. He saw her determined little chin with the dab of a freckle on it. She was another of those stubborn people—such kind as made good in this country. They never knew when they were licked.

"Why, sure, I'll help you, ma'am," he agreed affably. "Most everybody comes to me sooner or later, around here, leastwise. But it's powerful hot here. Come in an' have some lemonade."

It was a great deal later, when the courtesies were dispensed with and the subject of land well talked over, that Bud thought of the Hazen place. "I been thinkin'," said he, spoiling a new cigar, "that you'll be all by yourself. It's a hard life any way you take it, an' if you c'd get near other folks it'd be a great boost. I've located durn near every other family in these parts, an' it strikes me there's a nice section about an hour's ride from here, adjoinin' Jim Hunter's place."

Her head came up of a sudden and a sparkle of triumph set her blue eyes to shining. "That's the place I want!" she cried.

It staggered Bud. "Why, ma'am, how do you know? Mebbe you wouldn't like it at all. Better wait till you see it."

"I do know! Is there a house on it?"

"Ordinarily the go'ment don't furnish houses," said Bud with the suggestion of dryness. "But it so happens ol' man Hazen took this up an' got plumb discouraged. He went to Bend. You c'n take up the rights fer next to nothin'. I'll see about that. There's a house, well, an' barn on it."

She sprang from the chair. "Mr. Bud, can't we go right over and move in now? I want to get started."

Her face was tinted with a pink excitement and her mouth, which Bud decided was about as kissable a one as he had ever seen; was puckered in determination. She was finding a great

satisfaction in something. The puzzled storekeeper watched her. "Why, I reckon you could, but——"

*"But!"* she exclaimed. "That's the only word I've heard lately! I don't want to hear any more of it. I want you to help me file the necessary things and help me move. Whatever it's worth I'll pay you. But you've got to help. Can't we start right now?"

The storekeeper found things moving too fast, and he promptly vetoed the suggestion.

"We ain't goin' no place at two o'clock in the afternoon. Why, ma'am, people don't travel through them jack pines this time o' day, unless it's powerful necessary. Terrible hot. 'Bout four thirty we'll start. Meanwhile, we'll be collectin' some grub an' tools."

She seemed to acquire more and more energy. The delay fretted her and she moved restlessly around the store, choosing what she needed from the shelves. There were sundry implements of which she knew nothing at all, and Bud explained them. She listened quite carefully, a wry expression now and then tempering the determination. Bud was compelled to admire the way in which she accepted his picture of homestead life. None too rosy did he paint that picture, either. He wanted recruits for the land, but he wanted them to be disillusioned before they started residence. Once she stopped him.

"You're trying to discourage me," she said.

"Huh. I been here in this country twenty-five years, an' I'm tellin' you as straight as I can. The land grows on them as can stand it. For the rest it kills or drives out."

"It won't scare me. What others do I can do."

He silently applauded. "You can go out an' live on the place without hindrance while I sort of fix up things with Hazen an' the land office. You can go to Bend later."

The sun blazed downward and after four o'clock Bud ventured from the store, hitched his buggy, loaded on the trunk and duffle, and began the journey through the jack pines with his passenger. He watched her from his heavy-lidded eyes, waiting for some sign of weakness. For, in the dwarf forest the heat scorched them and the sand rose out of the road and cascaded from the branches. It was a dismal entrance to a hard land. However, if the girl felt any discouragement, she kept it well to herself, hands folded in her lap and sitting erect in the swaying seat. So Bud turned to casual topics, directing her attention in his kindly way to the things she must do and expect.

"Ma'am," he said finally, "if I ain't too personal, just what makes you do this?"

It struck tinder. He saw a spark flash. "Because I want to show him—people—that I'm no butterfly! That's why! And I *will* do it!"

There was, then, a man involved. Bud, seeing partial light, moved from the subject. They drove in silence while the rutted highway wound slowly through the heart of the pines, passed sundry trails, and came at last to a vast open plain over which the sun shed a blood glow.

"Purty, ain't it?" asked Bud, wistful pride in his voice. "See yonder house? That'll be your nearest neighbor, Jim Hunter. A mighty fine boy. You'll do well to know Jim."

"H'm."

"Yes, sir. Jim's the stubborn kind. Hard as nails an' never says much, but that's the only breed who'll survive this country. He'll help you."

The buggy turned off the road and went bumping over the flat land. They passed a corner fence and in time drew up at the door of Hunter's house. Bud called out: "Hey, Jim."

The girl seemed to become very still, and the storekeeper, turning, found a

flutter of excitement again in her eyes. Jim walked from his place, stooping slightly to pass the upper sill.

"You're goin' to have a neighbor, Jim. I'm locatin' her on the next place. You'll kinda watch——"

But he got no further and found himself thrust completely out of the picture. Hunter strode toward the buggy, the soberness quite gone from his face.

"Why, Mary, what on earth——"

"Don't make any mistake," she broke in. "I've come for that apology."

Bud raised a hand to a sorely puzzled head. The girl was sitting like a statue, her fingers interlaced in her lap, her chin held a little higher than usual, the delicate pink spreading slowly. The excitement was gone. Bud had the idea that it was suppressed only by an effort. Hunter stopped dead. "What?"

"I said I've come for that apology, Jim."

"Now why," he said angrily, "did you come all the way out in this hot and dusty place. Bud, you ought to have more sense."

"I asked him to bring me." She stamped a foot against the buggy floor. "Jim Hunter, don't you boss me. The time's past for that. I'm going to make you take back what you said that time if it takes me ten years! If writing letters won't do it, then I'll try farming. You might at least have answered my letters out of courtesy."

"What's all this foolishness about her living on the next place?" demanded Hunter, turning on Bud with a scowl. "Have you lost your mind? Great Scott, a woman can't fight this desert, and you ought to know it, of all men!"

Bud made an ineffectual gesture with his hand. There had been no preliminary warning to all this. The girl's mouth was puckered together, and she seemed on the point of crying from sheer anger.

"Oh, if I were a man I'd make you apologize right now! You can't bully me, Jim Hunter! I'll not stand for it, you hear? And I'll show you if I'm a butterfly! Go on, Mr. Bud."

The storekeeper was only too glad to escape. The end of the reins smartly thwacked the horse's rump, and they bumped over the uneven ground toward the Hazen place, a quarter mile on. Bud threw a quick glance behind him and saw Jim Hunter rooted in the same spot, arms akimbo, face furrowed. If he knew anything about it, Bud reflected, there was a young man who would soon wish a strong interview.

But he discreetly held his peace and, when they reached the house, began the job of packing the trunk and the various tools and utensils inside. When he had finished he found the girl seated on the trunk, surveying the walls with a plain dismay. Truly, it was a sight to discourage mortal woman. A bachelor originally had lived here, a bachelor who had found the job of keeping up externals too great, let alone the niceties of housekeeping. The floor was littered with dirt, the walls and ceilings were bare and unpleasant. A stove stood half dismantled. A chair and table were overturned and partly broken. A bunk once stood against a wall, but now had parted company from itself.

"Well," said the girl, taking off her jacket, "the first thing's to sweep."

The storekeeper was ready to shout. Spunk! She had more of it than a dozen men. Heretofore he had nourished misgivings, but now he moved solidly to her support. Those nice clothes and white hands didn't mean anything.

"Yes, ma'am," he agreed. "We need a new deal. You just take a bucket and go out back fer some water in the well. Meanwhile I'll tackle the broom, it bein' a dirty job."

Broom and water, hammer and nails, elbow grease and much talk—by these means and two or three hours' time Bud and the girl transformed the place into

a passable shelter. There had been some wood left. Bud built a fire and cooked a meal while the girl added a touch here and there to the bare walls. It was after dark when Bud climbed into his buggy and started for home.

"Well, I reckon you're dog tired. It's easy to sleep out here. An' that gun I give you will scare away most anything that walks or crawls. Ain't nothin' to be afeerd of, anyhow. In case anything should happen, you——"

"I'm not asking him for any favors!"

He suppressed a grin and continued as if there had been no interruption. "In a few days I'll bring you a collie dog an' a hoss. Then you'll be fixed. Meanwhile you just set tight an' git organized. I'll see Hazen an' the land office. G'night."

He drove away, bent for the pines and Burnt Creek. But if he thought to avoid Jim Hunter, he was mistaken. The young man was camped outside the house and Bud saw him move through the dark toward the buggy. The storekeeper sighed a little and came to a halt.

"All right," he acquiesced wearily. "Go on now an' say what's been burnin' you."

"Of all the old fools!" rasped out Jim Hunter. "You know very well she can't stay out here! It's impossible. What can a woman do? Here I work my head off and just break even. How do you expect her to get by? Just because she's bent on——"

"What should I have done?" asked Bud gently.

"Told her to go home, of course. Discourage her from such a crazy idea."

"Huh. No wonder you'n she quarreled. Don't you s'pose I did some arguin'? Huh; it was like talkin' to myself. If I hadn't brought her she'd up an' walked out on the darn desert by herself. Got to handle her another way. She's as stubborn as you."

Hunter groaned. "I know it. She's always been like that. If she gets her mind set, nothing short of an act of God can change it. But she can't stay!"

"I wouldn't be so durned certain," snapped out Bud. The late hour and the prior excitement had put him a little out of humor. "She seems plumb able to take care of herself. I've seen women get by on this desert. She can beat a man all hollow fer endurin' things."

"It's not only that," broke in Hunter. "It's not safe. All sorts of queer ducks roam these places. A lone woman just invites trouble. There's 'Bottle-nose' Henderson, for example. Great Scott——"

Bud scratched his stubbled chin. He, too, had thought of Bottle-nose. It was a prickling thought that remained in the rear of his head, vaguely disturbing. Yet here was Jim within a short distance of her. If she called for help, he'd be over in a jiffy. "Ain't nothin' to worry about. G'ap, Toby. You people fight it out atween you."

"There's not going to be any fight—or anything else!" bellowed Jim.

Bud had no answer for that. But a mile later, when the pines swallowed him, one small phrase came out of all the wonderment. "Son of a gun, just look what's happened to us to-day!" The peace—and the monotony—which had enfolded him during the last hot summer month was gone. Life was just one dog-goned problem after another. That's what made living endurable. "G'ap, Toby. We got to figger around this summow. There's a couple plumb in love with each other an' wantin' to make up. But they'd die afore they'd admit it. Got to fix that."

He found as the week went along that all ordinary conciliatory means had no effect. The quarrel had gone too far, endured too long. The battle had arrived at a stage of siege. It worried him, for the robust storekeeper was not a man to stand by and watch the tide carry "his people" downstream. Faith

had made him the prophet and leader of the homesteaders. He loved them and fought for them, took an unreasoning interest in their small affairs, argued with them, cursed them, and, at the last word when it seemed they could no longer struggle against the eternal hardships, gave his own time and money to keep the small flame of courage in their hearts. They were all, Bud believed, in a common brotherhood, striving for a common happiness and every sorrow and discouragement they suffered was sure to find its way eventually to his own big heart.

He had no means of knowing the nature of the quarrel, but still he worked shrewdly to dispel it. The day after the girl had settled on the homestead. Bud saddled the gentlest horse of his lot and sent it over to her by "Slivers" Gilstrap, a passing cow hand.

"You tell her, Slivers, that I'll be over after a while with the necessary filin' doodads, an' that she'd better ask Jim Hunter to fix that lock on the door."

Late that night Slivers came back with blood in his eye. "Say, you ol' galoot, what'd you go an' tell me to tell her that for? Minute I says it she flies off'n the handle an' says she ain't askin' Jim fer nuthin'. I thought mebbe he'd insulted her an', bein' a gentleman, offers to shoot him er hog tie him, er anything. Dog-goned if she didn't larrup me, then."

Thereupon Bud went to Bend and rode back to the girl's place with filing papers, another sage move up his sleeve. But he had no chance to act upon it. Mary, dressed in some kind of old clothes and already freckled by the sun, met him with fire in her eyes.

"Mr. Bud, I wish you'd go over and tell Jim Hunter I forbid him coming on my land! He's been here twice trying to browbeat me! You tell him I don't want but one thing from him, and that's an apology. Otherwise I'll use this pistol. I will!"

She flourished the heavy weapon in her hand and the storekeeper, suppressing a chuckle, noted that she used both hands to raise it. It would have been disastrous to offer advice then.

"Mebbe," he gravely offered, "I'd better notify the sher'ff to arrest him fer trespassin'."

"No, oh no! I wouldn't do that. But you tell him what I said, will you?"

So Bud, inwardly chuckling, went to Hunter's place, only to be motioned away. "Get out of here, you old goat. I won't listen to any more of your ideas. You're the cause of all this."

"The most ungrateful thing in the world," opined the storekeeper, returning to Burnt Creek, "is mixin' in family troubles. Men've been killed fer less. But if I'm to be hung I might as well be hung fer somethin' good. Patch that up summow."

Man and girl were crowded from his mind in the succeeding weeks. Events in the sparse Central Oregon country move with the same irregular frequency as elsewhere. Out of a serene sky broke seven kinds of trouble into which Bud was directly or indirectly drawn. For one thing, threshing season was on full blast, and every able-bodied man gave his services; this was communal law. Then the road commissioners in a frenzy of economy—just before election—decided to leave unimproved a more or less impassable stretch of the Bend Klamath Highway. The storekeeper, being apprised of it, rode to town in a fury and shocked those commissioners out of their economic resolutions. He fought for his people and his land ruthlessly, and, being a power in his own right, won. Hardly had this subsided when the shadow of Bottle-nose Henderson fell across the land.

Bottle-nose was one of those derelicts for whom society has no honored place. In a more highly organized community he would have been sent to an asylum. Cascade county tolerated him because he

stuck to the open spaces and left people alone. But somewhere on his lone trail the last restraining fiber of reason snapped, and he reverted to the law of the jungle. He ran amuck, terrorized the edges of the county, and sent unprotected families into gusts of fear. No one seemed safe from his swift attack. The sheriff set out a posse, and they traced his course southward toward the Burnt Creek region by three pilfered houses and several frightened women. This trail was all the posse found. Bottle-nose had become illusive as well as a highly dangerous character.

It was from him that the storekeeper conceived what seemed to be a sound idea one late summer evening as he jogged homeward. Toby, plodding along in dignified weariness, was startled to feel his master shake as if from ague; something that passed as a chuckle issued from Bud's barrellike chest.

"If I got caught I'd sure be hamstrung," mused the storekeeper. "Would lose all my reputation if I got caught an' mebbe git a dose of lead poisonin'. But it cert'nly oughta bring results."

And results were all that Bud cared about. At any rate, the idea took possession of him. His chin fell forward and Toby, unchecked, picked a faster pace toward Burnt Creek, viewing, doubtless, the measure of oats in the stall. A wise horse was Toby, but this time sentenced to a grievous disappointment. On reaching the store, Bud went in and returned with his revolver.

"G'ap, Toby; we've got to hustle. Dog-gone it, quit your balkin'! I feed an' pamper you too much, that's what. Git now! Ain't to be fooled with."

After short argument the sad Toby walked into the jack pines, bound for the desert. Leaving his horse to find the way, Bud relapsed to that reverie which years of solitude had acquainted him. Nor did he raise his head until the last dwarf pine was passed, and he stood against the gloom of the open land.

It was near nine o'clock. The moon displayed a thin, lifeless rind in the sky; the countless stars blinked down without dispelling the shadows. Across the open ground winked two lights, one from Jim Hunter's kitchen and the other from the girl's house, both cheerfully beckoning. Bud clucked his tongue and struck across the open, passed Hunter's place at a good distance, and, on arriving within a few hundred yards of the Hazen house, dismounted.

"Now, you goldurned animal," he whispered, "stay put. When I come back it'll be a-foggin'."

He took the revolver from the holster and, under the impulse of an unusual kind of excitement, drew the hammer part way back and turned the cylinder with a thumb. Ten feet away Tony dissolved into an indistinguishable blur. Bud took a mental line from his horse to both lights.

"Got to place that dog-goned critter," he murmured, advancing.

A heavy boot toe struck a projecting rock and he balanced wildly, failed to right himself, and fell to the ground. The impact seemed to shake him loose in a dozen vital spots. An immense grunt escaped him. Seemed as if it exploded in the air, but that was only imagination. He crawled painfully to his feet and went on until the light from the girl's kitchen window was quite clear. He could see inside the small room, but failed to locate her.

"Gosh, I got to see where she is afore I shoot."

He angled aside to get a better sweep of the room. It occurred to him then that he was more or less in the position of a Peeping Tom, and a rod of ice smote his back. "Fer a nickel I'd quit this fool stunt," he said to himself. Then the light was eclipsed for a moment as the girl moved to the front of the room. "That'd be the corner the stove's in. She's safe." He raised the revolver and aimed at the window.

It was not the best idea in the world. Bud began to suspect that earlier in the evening. But his self-defense was adequate enough. Both the girl and the man were too obstinate to listen to reason and summary methods had to be employed for their own good. They were just like two fighters who struggled long after the original injury had been dead and buried. Now the only thing a man could do with stubborn pride was blast it. What he meant to do was put a bullet through that window and shatter a pane of glass. That would give the girl a much-needed scare, sort of shake her confidence in her own strength. If, on hearing that shot, Jim Hunter didn't rush over to her house he, Dave Bud. would be greatly mistaken in his man. And if that threat of danger, always a welding influence, didn't change their relations, he'd be mighty disappointed. He brought the gun down on the bright window, taking care that the shot would break a pane and bury itself in the sill.

There was, of a sudden, a pad-pad of feet on the ground, an alarming rush of a body that went past him, wheeled like a football player, and bore down. Bud's revolver arm fell; a low figure hurtled from the shadows, struck him amidships, closed about him, and knocked him over with the savageness of a hungry cinnamon bear. The storekeeper's teeth rattled, he bit his chin and choked in the sand. A rock struck his head and nearly put him to sleep. Quite instinctively he put up both huge arms—he had dropped the gun—and pushed his assailant off; but before he could take advantage the man had thrown himself back again. A fist smacked against his temple and a familiar voice reached his half-buried ears.

"You sneaking coyote! Thought you'd raise the devil in another lonely house, eh? Thought you'd scare another woman half to death! I've been laying for you. Next time maybe you'll cache your horse where a man won't stumble across it. I'm just about going to kill you, you Bottle-nose skunk!"

It was Jim Hunter on the warpath! And mistaking him for Bottle-nose Henderson! Bud's mind worked in circles, amid a confusion of blows, a ton of sand, and smarting eyes. He had to get out of here in a hurry, no mistake. It wouldn't do for Jim to discover his identity. Jim wouldn't consider him in any better light, wouldn't understand. He had overlooked the fact that the young man would patrol the girl's home after dark and in patrolling run across Toby. The thing now was to make an exit and call it a bad venture.

He stifled a groan of protest. It was a darned good thing Jim had never seen Bottle-nose and noted the man's skinny shape. The storekeeper raised hands and feet, throwing Hunter back like a blanket, got up, and dashed toward Toby. By golly, but this was a mess. Look where he'd got himself in trying to do a good deed!

Hunter was on him like a wild cat and down to earth they went, rolling, clawing, fighting, with no words at all to waste. Bud flung the lighter man off, got up again, ran a yard, and was pulled down. Somehow Jim's fists found their mark. Bud felt his nose ache with resentment. In turn he traded blows and heard them land solidly. There was a burly strength in the storekeeper's shoulder, a power which once in the older days had made him top hand of the county. Right now he spared none of it to get clear. But it didn't matter how many times he threw Hunter away, the man was back again, pinning him to earth like a clothes dummy; and each fall hurt the corpulent Bud more than he cared to admit.

"I got to quit smokin'," he said to himself. "Wind ain't no good."

Toby, near by, snorted. They rolled beneath his very feet and he moved uneasily. Bud dragged himself and Hunter upward toward the saddle. "No you

don't!" panted Jim. "Come back here." Bud, falling, had his face turned toward the girl's house, and he saw a shaft of light spring out of the opening doorway. Somebody stood on the threshold. He wondered if this was actually so or whether the little skyrockets in his head caused the illusion. He was soon enough put to rest about it; for a shrill, terrified scream shattered the air. Hunter's aggressiveness instantly ebbed, and a gasp broke from his hard-pressed lungs.

"What's that?"

Bud's mind attained an unprecedented nimbleness. Somebody had come across the desert from an opposite direction and gone into the house while they were fighting the silent battle. Bottle-nose Henderson, then! The man was somewhere in the Burnt Creek region.

"Huh," he grunted. "I thought you were tryin' to put somethin' over on me. Thought you was Bottle-nose. Been trailin' him all day. Leggo, you darned scorpion! This dog-goned darkness! I thought I had him pinned down."

Together they ran across the prairie and reached the open door. Hunter was the faster, and he made a single stride to the far corner where the girl, back to the wall, faced a thin, nondescript creature whose crimson, bulbous nose and slack mouth gave him a particularly vicious expression.

Hunter flung himself upon the man and threw him against the wall so hard as to make the small place shake from rafter to floor. Bud, near done up, was content to watch them fight. Hunter was a veritable wild cat. He beat down the invader's defense and, like a boy who has found pleasure in throwing things, swept his man across the room and slammed him against another wall, overturning a chair and table on the way.

It was soon over. Bottle-nose collapsed with a sigh of defeat, slid to the floor, and whined for mercy. Jim Hunter strode over to the girl, looking as one just emerged from a mob attack. His shirt hung in ribbons about his gangling arms. There were sundry cuts over his face, and his hair was ground with sand. But nothing could conceal the flare in his eyes.

"Honey!" he cried. "I'll kill that skunk if he's hurt you!"

"Jimmy, what *has* happened?"

Bud turned his broad back and wryly moved his nose. There was more or less incoherent explanation and questioning from both and out of it, unexpectedly:

"Jimmy—I won't ask that apology if you don't want to give it."

"I'm a bum. I give it, Mary. I'm just a stubborn bum."

"You give it! Jimmy! I'll never ask another. And I take back everything."

A great and ponderous silence ensued, broken by the impatient Bud.

"Here I trail this fella all day long and then you dog-gone wild cat—look what you done to me."

It was not a very strong story, but Jim Hunter was too preoccupied to pick flaws.

"I'll take Bottle-nose back with me," continued Bud. "Say, just what was this quarrel about, anyway? Seein's I got so durned involved in it, might as well tell me."

"He called me a useless butterfly, and I had to show him I wasn't."

"Which was after she told me I couldn't do anything worth while."

"For gosh sake," stuttered the storekeeper. "Was *that* all?" It was certainly queer what small things set people at a tangent. Stubborn people, chiefly. But what great fighters they made. Just the kind to populate this sturdy, harsh land. He fell gloomily to another thought. "Suppose now you'll make up an' go back to town."

"Not on your life," declared Jim. "It's the only place I'm worth anything. Why, I'm happy here!"

"So'm I," added the girl. "That settles it."

Bud was forced to a rare smile and looked like the cat who had swallowed the canary.

"Well, I'm sure sorry my little peace efforts didn't work. Took Bottle-nose to turn the trick. So long, folks."

It was later, entering the dark forest with his prisoner, that he lifted his face to the dim, star-scattered sky and gave thanks. Some day this country would blossom under the hands of these vigorous and clean-chosen people. Some day!

## ON THE ARIZONA LINE

I AM lonesome, oh, so lonesome, for the far-away Southwest,
Where the evening shadows lengthen from o'er the mountain crest.
I can hear the night winds sighing through the piñon and the pine.
In the far-off Frisco mountains on the Arizona line.

I can see the skulking coyote through the darkening purple haze,
And I hear the lobo howling down where the longhorns graze.
I can see my campfire flicker on the rim rocks shine.
In the far-off Frisco mountains on the Arizona line.

I can see the silvery moonbeams on Dillman's rugged heights,
And I hear the eagle screaming on his swiftly homeward flight,
And somewhere up the cañon I can hear the lion's whine
In the far-off Frisco mountains on the Arizona line.

I can see the ruined cities of a long-forgotten race,
With the ghostly quaking aspen growing round the vacant place.
I can see the darkening shadows on their ancient broken shrine.
In the far-off Frisco mountains on the Arizona line.

I can see Hell-roaring Mesa a-down old Luna way,
Like a lake of molten silver in the moonlight cold and gray,
And I hear the night birds calling from the wild wood tangled vine,
In the far-off Frisco mountains on the Arizona line.

HOWARD RAGSDALE.

# The Great Enemy

BY

J. Thompson Kescel

*Author of "Because of the Bad Heart," etc.*

THEY were a grave-looking score of men who made up the group standing in front of the sheriff's office—their eyes turned westward along the dusty street toward a distant, grayish-blue mountain range.

All were either ranchers or cowboys, except stocky, bronze-faced Sheriff Ed Crowder, just then speaking.

"He'll come, all right. Don't worry about that. He passed me his word that he would—and he'll be here. Like as not, that's him way out yonder, where you can see the little cloud of dust."

A tall, grizzled, coatless rancher, squinting through the Arizona sunshine, observed: "Hope 'tis him. And moreover, I hope he kin do what you say, 'cause the situation is desperate. It's either our movin'—or else wipin' 'em out. The way she is now, we're right close to licked. Nigh on to a hundred head of stock that we know of made away with durin' the past week, alone.

"The Lunita Plateau, with its fine stretches of grazin' land, plenty of timber, and lots of water, ought to be a cattleman's paradise. But if there's one place in the whole world that makes me think it's hell, the Plateau is just now that there place. Something drastic must be done, or—well, we'll have to pull out, and let 'em have full swing."

Sheriff Crowder nodded. "I sabe what you're up against. The West has never seen a gang of rustlers their equal. But I think he'll clean 'em up for you. Maybe at wages—so much a month. Or possibly, so much a scalp."

As the men stood there in front of the sheriff's office and looked along the street out onto the flat, a mile beyond the sprawling, little town, they talked earnestly of the subject uppermost in their minds. Whoever was coming, appeared to be in no hurry; for the dust rose slowly, then drifted lazily away on the gentle afternoon breeze.

"Never have I seen a more ideal place fer a ranch than the Lunita." This from a lean, tanned rancher named Dan Meeker, uncrossing his shirt-sleeved arms and reaching for tobacco and cigarette papers in an upper vest pocket. "Everything 'bout perfect as it could be. Feed, water, wood, and good climate. But if something can't be done to put a stop to the dirty work, I fer one intend to drive what stock I've got left to market, and pull up stakes."

"Me, too!" chimed in the tall, grizzled rancher, thumbs hooked in his full cartridge belt. "This is fast gettin' to be no country fer a white man."

Little by little the dust rose closer, until at the head of the street, a quarter of a mile away, a horseman could be made out—a horseman who rode slowly along, with a darkish object that looked like a large dog walking just to the right of the horse's forelegs.

Some of the men had seen and talked to the one they were expecting. All knew him by reputation, for he was quite a famous character throughout a big section of the Southwest. But Sheriff Crowder, alone of the group, knew the man intimately.

"It's him!" Crowder observed quietly, hands raised to form a shield for his eyes. "And he's come on the day and at the time he said he'd be here. So you folks ought to feel a bit easier, anyhow.

"He's made quite a trip, too, from his country 'way off to the south there, to come up here. A good many days' ride. Meanin'—as I take it—he thinks that he can do a lot toward helpin' you get rid of the sneaking rascals that's played so much hob with your stock. If he didn't think he could help you, he wouldn't have come."

With great interest the men watched the oncoming rider walk his mount along the dusty, sunlit street, flanked by low-built dwellings and plain-front business establishments. As he advanced, they saw that his mount was of a lightish color, probably a dingy white, and large for a saddle horse. Closer, and they saw that the animal was powerfully built, with chest very wide, and legs, though muscular, trim as a racer's.

Closer still—and they saw that the dog was of a breed with which they were entirely unfamiliar. A big, strong beast, with fore-shoulders that reached well up to a man's thigh, and a coat that was dark, though just then dust coated. He was neither bloodhound nor stag hound, but apparently a cross of the two breeds. For he had to a great extent the head, ears, wrinkled face, and large, solemn dark eyes of the bloodhound, though both head and powerfully built legs and body somewhat resembled those of a fleet-footed stag hound.

Still closer, until he stopped in front of them—and all eyes were fixed intently upon the great-chested horse's wizen-faced little rider. The skinny little old redskin, "Yuma" Tom—was bare to the waist, a red flannel band around his head, fitting close like an Apache turban. A brightly colored blanket was thrown carelessly across the saddle seat in front of him, and, lying crosswise on the blanket, was a fine-looking repeating rifle.

"How, Tom!" the sheriff boomed in greeting. "Get down and shake hands with my friends. We're all right glad to see you."

With the ease of a young warrior, Yuma Tom swung to the ground and tossed the bridle reins to the already waiting dog. Then, blanket on his shoulder, rifle in his left hand, around his waist a filled cartridge belt, from which hung a long sheathed knife, and wearing buckskin trousers and moccasins, Yuma Tom—very much at his ease—walked to the group, grasped Crowder's hand and returned: "How, Mista Ed! You see I here."

"Yeah, Tom; I see you are. And I'll repeat what I said just now—we're right glad to see you." Crowder fished a large and very black cigar from his vest pocket. "Here, Tom. Have a smoke. I got this especially fer you, as I know you like 'em strong. Light up, and meet the rest of the boys."

"Good, strong cigar," Yuma Tom observed, after a pull at the fat maduro. " 'Most strong as my Mexican brand, Tepic specials."

Cigar sticking straight out from the corner of his mouth, he shook hands with each man in turn, before Crowder suggested that they all go into his office.

"Want to tie your horse?" asked Dan Meeker, the lean, tanned rancher.

Yuma Tom shook his head. "No. My dog, Nopal, holdum; he like to do it."

Crowder in the lead, they filed into the office, where—Yuma Tom standing behind a desk beside the stocky sheriff, and the score of other men standing in front—the business of the day was at once begun.

"Do you think you can rid us of the dog-gone pests?" Meeker inquired, looking squarely into the little redskin's coal-black eyes.

"Um, yes—or else I no be here. Course I no can killum all. But I get good many. And I tell you how to get more.

"I white man's friend. But even so, I no can afford to work for nuthin. How much you pay?"

"We thought maybe as how ten dollars a scalp would be a fair price," said Meeker quietly, as spokesman for the cattlemen. "But fer the one we consider the leader of the low-down rustlin' band, we'll right cheerful give up five hundred good American cart wheels."

"No wantum cart wheels," Yuma Tom responded soberly, failing to understand that in this case cart wheels referred to money. "Injun no care much for wagon. Like money or ponies."

"Five hundred cart wheels means five hundred dollars, Tom," Crowder quickly explained, with a smile.

Yuma Tom nodded and blew out a cloud of smoke. "Um, I see. Ten dollars for scalp of common ones. But five hundred for special one. How you know which is this big cat?"

" 'Cause this here critter has got an extra toe on each front paw. That's how we come to call him Ex Toes. And judging from his tracks, he's the biggest mountain lion Arizony or any other country has ever seen. Like as not, a whale of a big varmint, weighin' more than two hundred pounds, and measurin' nine or ten feet from his nose to the tip of his tail."

Talking in the spirit of righteous indignation, shared, he knew, by the other stockmen, Meeker went on.

"I tell you the situation is serious. It's right now to the point where there ain't a cent in cattle raisin' on this plateau. Not even a livin'—as the dog-gone cats, mountain lions, pumas, cougars, panthers, or whatever you want to call 'em, gets away with more stock than is drove out of the country fer shippin'.

"Them blasted beasts kill just fer the love of killin'. Kill ten times—yes, a hundred times—more than they kin eat. Kill whenever they're hungry—which is, maybe, every two or three days. And seems one animal won't touch the kill of another. Each got to have his own meat. Nor will they eat a critter whose meat is the least tainted. This is one reason why we can't poison 'em. Traps won't get 'em, either. They're too foxy fer traps. And as fer shootin' 'em, that seems to be out of the question, as they're too slick for a white man. Besides bein' too many of 'em.

"Where there used to be a few dozens, there's now several hundreds. Breed in the wild, broken country runnin' down to the Colorado River. For miles goin' down that way, the country is chock full of narrow ravines, gullies, and caves—caves that fair honeycomb some of the mountains—makin' a perfect breedin' place fer the varmints.

"Feedin' conditions, too, are now 'bout as ideal as they could want. Our cattle, sheep, and even deer keep 'em fat and help to increase their numbers."

Yuma Tom took the cigar from his mouth and ran his eyes over the group assembled in front of him. "Um. I sabe what you up against. Heap bad! Still, maybe I can help you little bit."

"That's what Ed, here, told us," Meeker quickly returned. "And if our figures don't look good, say so."

"Um, price you say, all right. I makeum money out of it, while at same time help white man friends. One time,

I hate white man and war on them. But long time since, I bury the hatchet and think of white man as my brother.

"I now just skinny old Injun. Yet my brain no grow old with my body. When mountain lion start get bad with cattle and horses of my people, we killum off. But we Injun, and know how to do that. Then I think of maybe a better way to keep big cats from doing dirty work.

"Nopal, out there, first off that way. Bloodhound fine tracker. He, after trained, track mountain lion any place—even though scent left by lion much same as wild cat. Bloodhound tell difference in scent and keep on trail. But one thing 'gainst him. He too slow on foot. So, after talk with my white man friend, 'Pop' Halverson, we decide that must have dog with more speed.

"Stag hound have that speed, and he heap strong on chase. Bloodhound have nose. Nopal, out there, half bloodhound, half stag hound—and he one year old to-day. Just good age, with training I give him, to do fine job.

"So, we ready. Ten dollar for each scalp. While if I ketchum old Ex Toes, you give me five hundred dollar for him."

"Thank you, Tom." Meeker reached across the desk. "Here, shake! Ed, there, told us that if you would take the job of cleaning up the blasted critters, you'd come nearer doin' it than any man in Arizona—Injun or white."

Few, if any, of the men present, thought that this skinny little old Indian could accomplish much more than they had already done toward exterminating the big cats. Yet so serious was the situation that they were willing to try anything. In the past year, the bodies of hundreds of cattle—calves, heifers, cows, steers, and colts—had been found lying dead in the valleys, on the flats, and among the hills of the table-land. And each rancher was greatly worried as to what loss would be shown at the next round-up. Sheriff Ed Crowder had said that Yuma Tom might help them. They doubted whether he could, to any appreciable extent. But even though his scheme were only an experiment, it ought to be tried.

By the end of the next week, however, their hopes rose high when the half-naked old red man, astride his dull, white-coated stallion, Smoky Cloud—a full brother to his tribe's splendid racer, Curly Wind—rode to Meeker's ranch, Nopal walking sedately within a yard of the horse's fore legs—and delivered thirty-three mountain-lion scalps.

"This is fine, Tom!" Meeker exulted. "Goin' on like this fer a few months, and you'll have the pests under control."

"Um, yes," Yuma Tom returned noncommittally. "But there awful lot of pumas 'round here, and from number of dead cattle I find all 'round every place, I no filled right up to top of head with opytism. Cow, calf, steer. And all only eatum a little bit.

"Lion eat only little of what he kill. Then leave rest of meat to rot. And that one you call Ex Toes—he whopper! Big feet; big body; big all over. I know, for I find his tracks many times. And, too, I find where he lay down in dust, after gorged with meat of fine yearling.

"Slick old beast! Slicker than all rest. We already bad enemies."

When the ranchers learned what Yuma Tom had accomplished in such a short time, they were greatly elated, and had visions of the dreaded marauders being soon practically wiped out. But when nearly a month went by, and the little redskin brought in no more scalps, their hopes were dashed to the ground.

They knew that he was busy, too. For on a number of occasions he had been seen dashing into the hills on the powerful Smoky Cloud, just behind the baying Nopal, who with nose close to earth, showed that he was on a warm scent.

That first week's kill had been a fine starter. But since then, so far as the ranchers knew, not a single mountain lion had been killed. Twice Yuma Tom had been questioned; and both times he had made no reply, save a short and uncommunicative grunt. He, the man they had depended so much upon, had evidently fallen down on his job.

He was not a quitter, though. That much could be said for him. Astride his great-chested, white-coated mount, tearing along behind the racing Nopal, the little redskin, rifle in hand, seemed to be doing his best. Still, the ranchers saw no concrete evidence of success. No scalps—and scalps were what counted with them.

Little did they know what was in the red man's mind, though, or what he was trying to do.

He had an enemy there on the plateau. An enemy to all whites, cattle, and game—a very large, cunning, tawny, supple-bodied mountain lion, weighing as much as a big man and having the strength of a full-grown tiger—an enemy that skulked through the brush as silently as a cat, or lay on the limb of a tree or a jutting ledge for hours without moving, as it waited for a chance to pounce on its prey. It was Indian against mountain lion, in the latter's own country—the Indian caring for little else than to bring in Ex Toes' forepaws and scalp.

And now, just before sunrise, among the hills at the edge of a wide valley, old Yuma Tom—rifle in hand and naked to the waist—peered down at the tracks beside a fat, two-year-old steer, while Smoky Cloud stood a rod away, and Nopal growled as he sniffed at the cooling and only partly eaten body.

Yuma Tom gave vent to his disgust with a grunt. This was more of Ex Toes' work. There in the earth was the telltale imprint of the big cat's forepaws. And once more he had slaughtered, gorged himself, and walked away.

The beast that had made those tracks, had been constantly on Yuma Tom's mind during all of his waking hours for the past month. This was the sole reason that no scalps had been turned in to Meeker. There had been kills, and scalps taken—but never once had the coal-black eye, peering along the rifle barrel as a bullet sped home, seen the beast that now meant so much to Yuma Tom.

Five hundred dollars was worth getting. Yet it was not the money now that made Yuma Tom devote all his energies to bringing down the mighty Ex Toes. It was more that his pride was touched, and that he was being flouted by a four-footed foe.

Nopal, too, was on edge. A dozen times the dog had, with his solemn, dark eyes, looked at the mountain lion's kill. And as many times, nose close to the ground and baying, he had dashed along, across flats, through twisting cañons, up hill and down—the sure-footed stallion tearing along behind, his wizen-faced master sitting monkeylike in the saddle. Yet always the trail was lost in the wild, badly broken-up country, with its hundreds of caves, running down to the Colorado.

Grunting, Yuma Tom swung into the saddle, and after adjusting the red flannel band around his head, he adjured Nopal: "Smellum out!"

The dog turned and started off, his half-naked master riding a short distance behind. There had been many such starts as this from Ex Toes' kill. The great cat, though, was still at large.

They had gone barely a mile when Nopal, rounding a turn in the hills, suddenly let out a glad yelp as a tawny creature, long tail swishing and whitish belly showing clearly in the early sunrise, sprang from a clump of thick brush three hundred yards away, and bounded up the hillside. On the uphill rush, the dog gained slightly on the racing lion,

as did also Yuma Tom. This was as it had been in other chases, for upgrade, Nopal was always the faster. On the level, he just about held his own. Down grade, the cats—with their long leaps of thirty or forty feet—had decidedly the advantage.

Quickly now, as Smoky Cloud charged up the slope, the sharp-eyed redskin took a pop at the fleeing animal. He drew blood. But before he could fire again, the tawny beast topped the ridge and in lengthy leaps tore down the opposite side of the hill.

After that, for two miles the race went on—downhill, uphill, across short, level stretches, and into a rocky cañon running toward the more rugged terrain bordering the Colorado. There had been no other chance for a shot at the rapidly moving target.

But now the chance had come. For the pursued beast suddenly ran up the trunk of a solitary pine, and flattened out on one of the lower limbs, half the size of a man's body.

Dismounting, Yuma Tom walked with Nopal by his side to within ten yards of the pine, then raised his rifle to his shoulder. His coal-black eye found the sights. He pressed the trigger—and the bullet found its mark. A quiver ran through the great cat's body. Still he did not fall, and Yuma Tom, cocking his turbaned head, peered intently upward. He hadn't missed. Of that he was sure. Yet——

Now, he had it! The beast was dead. Its claws were sunk into the bark on the limb.

Yuma Tom could shoot the claws loose, which he did. But the instant his searching gaze fell on the animal's forepaws, as it lay on the ground, he saw that he had not yet brought down the cunning Ex Toes.

Nopal's bloodhound nose—the inheritance from his bloodhound mother—had served well, until he had caught sight of the lion. Then the strain of his stag-hound sire had sprung to the fore. Ordinarily, this would have made little difference, as it was upon this cross in breeds that Yuma Tom had depended for the success of his experiment. The bloodhound instincts to follow the scent—the stag-hound strain for sight and speed. This time, however, it looked as if a good chance to bag Ex Toes had been missed, as the dog had left the scent and followed by sight.

The day was still young, though. So, after scalping the dead mountain lion, Yuma Tom mounted Smoky Cloud, and, with Nopal following along behind, rode to where the chase had started.

Here, as he pointed at Ex Toes' tracks in the earth beside the body, he ordered: "Nopal, smellum out. This time, stick to 'em close!"

On the instant, the dog was off again. When he reached the brush where the lion that had been killed had jumped out, Nopal, instead of taking the scent up the hillside, continued on along in the cañon. It was then that the little Indian on the big stallion knew that he was again on the trail of Ex Toes.

On they traveled, at good speed—Yuma Tom, rifle in hand and with his gaudy blanket tied on behind the saddle—while his powerfully built mount kept close to the eager Nopal, who showed, by his actions and an occasional bay, that the scent was warm.

When the dog turned and made up the side of a gently sloping hill, dotted with rocks and scattering clumps of small brush, Smoky Cloud, of his own accord, did the same. He, like his master and Nopal, was keen over the chase. He enjoyed it. It was exhilarating and exciting.

Up the hillside to the top—down the opposite slope—up and down other hills, they hurried. Until from a clump of scrubby oaks, four hundred yards away, a large, tawny figure bounded into sight and made off across a level flat toward the south. Yuma Tom thought that it

was Ex Toes, and that as usual he was heading toward the mountain lions' retreat—the badly cut-up section of country on the north side of the Colorado. Once there, he calculated, perhaps, to slink into one of the numerous caves and lie low, until hunger ordered him out into the open.

"Hi! Hi! Takeum, good dog!" Yuma Tom yelled, and dug his moccasined heels into the stallion's flanks.

His shouted words carried to the big cat, which immediately broke into a run. The race was now on in dead earnest, with a quarter of a mile of level ground before the next hill.

Trying a pot shot, Yuma Tom sent a bullet after the flying animal, which immediately increased its speed as the lead slug kicked up a puff of dust just to the right of its side. He was a hard target, and the distance long, yet the old red man had scored a hit on harder shots, and he had plenty of cartridges in the belt around his waist, where, also, dangled his long-bladed, keen-edged knife.

Crack! As the shot rent the clear table-land air, a bullet scored the lion's tawny side. Yuma Tom hoped that he could bring down his quarry before the rougher country was reached.

But the big cat bounded up the slope, across the flat, and down the far side of the hill, without being again touched.

Now in long leaps it sped away, for downhill it could cover forty feet at every jump. Here, too, the sure-footed stallion could not go so fast, though there was no let-up in the speed of the racing Nopal.

Down the hillside into the cañon—and then Smoky Cloud stumbled and fell to his side—throwing Yuma Tom from the saddle. As the little Indian struck the ground, his sharp eyes lighted on the clear imprint of a mountain lion's front paw. It was Ex Toes.

Quick as a flash, Yuma Tom was on his feet, and vaulting into the saddle. Smoky Cloud had not hurt himself, and was, like his master, ready to resume the chase. Uphill and down for a mile—the racing horse continually losing ground. Yet the skinny old Indian had no thought of giving up. By scent and sight, Nopal would keep on the trail, while his master, guided by the dog's bays and an occasional glimpse of him, could ride at his best speed behind.

Perhaps, as he had done before, Nopal would bring his quarry to a stand against the perpendicular side of a frowning cliff—in a tree—or in some small cave where he could be smoked out.

For two miles Yuma Tom tore on, at times taking big chances. He knew that he had lost ground. Only just once in a while, now, did he hear a sound of the dog, and for a long time he had seen nothing of him. The country was rapidly getting rougher. It seemed really hopeless to keep going.

Yet on he rode, fast as he dared—through cañons, brush patches, and an occasional small thicket of pine. On and on, until he dashed around a turn in a gorgelike, rocky ravine, where the country was badly broken up, he once more heard Nopal plainly. This time the dog was barking—and not a great distance away.

"Hi! Hi! Smoky Cloud! Faster!" Yuma Tom piped, with his left hand holding the bridle reins fairly taut.

Blowing hard, the cloudy white stallion dashed around the next turn, where, in stepping on a round, fist-sized stone, he was thrown completely off balance and lunged sideways toward the rocky wall.

In an effort to protect himself, Yuma Tom threw out the hand that held his rifle. The stock struck the rock, and broke short off—the barrel and the loaded magazine falling to the ground.

Smoky Cloud recovered his footing and rushed on. Yuma Tom tossed the rifle's stock away in disgust. What good was it to him? And now, apparently

just around the next turn, Nopal barked in wild delight.

A half dozen rods more, Yuma Tom made the turn and saw what he had hopel to see—the mighty Ex Toes, the biggest and wisest of all the mountain lions in that section, cornered at last. He had run into a cul-de-sac, with high, perpendicular walls on three sides, and the dog and his master blocking the fourth side.

So, tawny, supple body crouched sidewise against the head of the gorge, his ears laid back, his yellowish, fiery eyes glowing, his mouth half open, showing his white teeth, and his long tail gently swishing as he spit and snarled, he waited for he knew not what.

Ten yards from him, Yuma Tom sat quietly on his panting mount. There ahead, well out of reach of the sharp claws, was Nopal, barking at the cornered cat.

It was as the little old Indian had thought—dogs could, if backed up by men, practically clean out the mountain lions. Ex Toes, the mightiest of them all, was the same as the rest when cornered. Even though he could, with one sweep of his paw, rip a dog almost to pieces, it was one of his characteristics to run from even the smallest member of the canine family.

A pack of dogs, such as Nopal, could force the big cats to make for cover just as Ex Toes had done. The men riding behind, would not expect to keep up with the pack. But later they would come on and, with the animals treed or in the caves, make the kills. Smoke would bring the lions from underground. Bullets would do the rest.

Though Yuma Tom's experiment had proved itself a success, yet what good was his knowledge going to do him now? He had no rifle. And Ex Toes, heavy as a very large man, knew how to use his teeth and claws.

Still Yuma Tom did not intend to leave without his enemy's scalp and paws. The extra toe would show what animal it was.

Dismounting, he took the gaudy red blanket from the saddle. Then, after taking saddle and bridle from Smoky Cloud, so that he would be free to graze if the combat now under contemplation turned out badly, Yuma Tom—keen-edged, long-bladed knife in his right hand, and unfolded blanket in his left—stepped lightly toward the spitting big cat, its head turned toward the advancing red man.

"Keep back, Nopal!" Yuma Tom cautioned, as he passed the dog. "This my fight. I got score to settle."

The dog obeyed, though he kept up his barking.

Yuma Tom knew the danger that he was running. One good blow with those sharp claws, ripping through flesh, and he would be out of the fight. Perhaps not killed, but certainly badly injured.

Ten feet apart, and as the little Indian stood with blanket unfolded in his left hand and knife in his right, the adversaries eyed each other closely.

Yuma Tom edged nearer. Inch by inch, the distance between them was cut down, until the ten feet had been reduced to six. Another inch, and the blanket was flipped forward and upward, above the lion's head.

Quick as lightning, up went a paw, as the tawny beast half rose on its hind legs.

So quickly was the blanket jerked away, however, that the claws failed to catch in the fabric. Then out shot the end of the blanket again, this time higher. Ex Toes rose to full height—his dull, white underside making a clear target.

All the claws ripped into the soft wool of the blanket. And as they did, Yuma Tom's knife whisked home in a vicious upward sweep into the spot which he had maneuvered to reach.

It was late afternoon when, astride

Smoky Cloud, with a gunny sack on the saddle horn, and with Nopal walking sedately along within a yard of the big stallion's forelegs, Yuma Tom stopped at Dan Meeker's ranch.

"How, Mista Dan!" he said good-naturedly, swinging to the ground. "I no grouchy old Injun, no more! 'Cause now, Ex Toes a goner. He no more kill lots of cattle, just for love of killum.

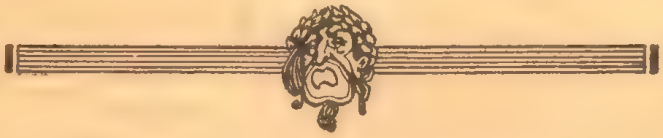
"Um, yes. And in gunny sack on horn of saddle there, you find his scalp and forepaws—along with other scalp. Gotum, at last! And I prove my experiment is all right."

He explained, then, how the Lunita Plateau could be made, as it should be, as fine a place of country for stock as there was in the whole West.

A couple of days later he gave a demonstration, as Nopal picked up the fresh trail of a mountain lion, and followed it to a cave—where the tawny, snarling beast was smoked out and shot.

Then at the end of the month, when two younger, well-mounted Apaches turned up at Meeker's, Yuma Tom said that he must go back to the south.

"But my Apache brothers keep on with work," he added. "And I leave Nopal with them, for two years. He, as leader of pack, train other dogs. And in little while, the great enemy to your stock give no trouble more than other place. I go, now. Adios!"



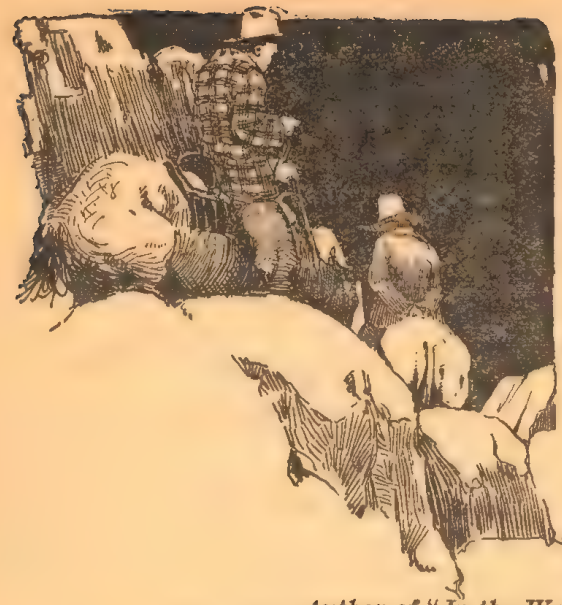
## THE HOPI MUSICIANS

ACCORDING to F. W. Fewkes, of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, District of Columbia, the Hopi Indians of Arizona have a strong musical bent. Their reservation is situated in Navajo County, northeast of Flagstaff. These Indians are said to be a musical people, and the songs of the Hopis rank as some of the most beautiful of all Indian melodies.

They are rightly said to be a musical people, for almost all their daily tasks are accompanied by song. As the men, returning from the fields, climb the high cliffs which lead to their homes, they sing in unison. The girls, as they grind the corn at the stone mills, sing. Far out over the foothills to the base of the mesa float their voices, for the ordinary time for grinding the corn is at night. Rabbit hunts are accompanied by songs, and foot races frequently open and close with a prescribed song.

Hopi songs depend in a measure for their artistic character on the purposes for which they are intended. Some are intended for secular occupations, and others are used only for ceremonial celebrations. These latter are said to have "a wealth of expression rarely equaled and seldom surpassed." There are many of these sacred songs for particular rites, like the numerous songs of the masked dancers of the Katcinas and the songs sung around the medicine bowl. The best of these sacred songs are said to be those which are sung in the flute celebration which occurs in August. These songs are sung to the accompaniment of a flagolet, the origin of which is ascribed by the Hopis to the time when their ancestors lived in the nether world.

The Hopis do not sing in parts, nor do they harmonize their songs. It is impossible to transcribe them on a piano in the natural scale without introducing tones which they do not sing.



# Fools and Mules

## [A SHORTY McKAY STORY]

By

**Ray Humphreys**

*Author of "In the Wrong Pasture," etc.*

SNOW, which had first capped the higher peaks of the Sangre de Cristos late in August, had unrolled its fleecy blanket down the slopes of the mountains, as the weeks went by, and had now smothered Monte Vista in huge crystal drifts that had all but buried the snug little town. The high roads that wound out of the village up to the various silver mines were hopelessly blocked for any sort of conveyance and open only to the most daring of horsemen, or the slow, plodding snowshoer.

So, when the First State Bank of Monte Vista found it necessary to get the three-thousand-dollar pay roll up to the Consolidated, back in the very heart of the snow country, it called upon Sheriff Joe Cook for two reasons: one, it wanted a suggestion as to the best method of procedure, snowshoes or saddle horses, and the other, it wanted an armed escort for the cash, for there were rumors that "Buck" Bancroft, road agent de luxe, who had been operating on the western slope in the autumn, had been seen on the valley side of the range, and the pay roll would be pickings for him.

"Blah!" snorted Sheriff Cook, when the possibility of Bancroft's being in the vicinity was mentioned to him. "That jasper has a reward o' five hundred berries on his head, and he ain't venturin' nowhere near my district, where law an' order reign supreme, even ef I do say so myself, as shouldn't, an' further, what is thar to rob or hold up on this side o' the Sangre? Nuthin' but a few minin' shacks an' isolated ranches, where he might git bacon or git shot, but no dough. Don't yuh worry none about no Bancroft. He's plumb across the range!"

But the bank officials, as they were responsible for the pay roll until it was delivered at the Consolidated office, were mildly insistent that the sheriff furnish an escort and likewise suggest a responsible man to carry the cash itself, and the sheriff, having been driven out of his warm office that very morning by his deputy, "Shorty" McKay, who was endeavoring, out loud, to make certain strange words fit into a rhyme for a new "pome," had up and suggested that the bank save money by letting Shorty go as their messenger with the money.

"But who'll be his escort?" they asked.

"He'll guard himself," retorted the sheriff hopefully, "seein' he's a deputy

an' everythin'. The only thing he'll have to look out fer is the mountain sheep, which are grazin' low on account o' the extra severe snows, and which may dispute the road with him, buttin' him kerplunk into a drift somewheres!"

So, immediately after Sheriff Cook had nominated him, the nominations were closed and Shorty was elected to go up the lariat trail, through the dazzling white, to the Consolidated, where the miners were still digging in the soft "innards" of the earth and wanted their pay, snow or no snow.

"I've heard," said the bank cashier, Bradley, who was putting in his first winter snowbound in the Rockies, "that a mule is the most sure-footed animal on a narrow, steep trail, and I expect that would be doubly true on a slippery, icy one. We had best acquire a reliable mule for this man McKay!"

"Second that motion," said Art Robinson, the teller. "We don't want that dough in the bottom of a ravine somewheres so that we'll have to go out and dig for it. Get him a mule."

"A mule," said President Warren, in the judicious tones he took pains to cultivate as Monte Vista's banker, "is just the thing for that man McKay—slow and sure, safe and sound!"

The president, it seemed, remembered McKay, and if memory was not at fault McKay was too speedy a rider for any good.

So when Shorty, informed of his election by Sheriff Cook, reported at the bank, they told him, gently, that he must go on a mule, so that the money would be sure to arrive on schedule.

"Mule!" whooped Shorty. "Not on yuhr tintype! No mule for me while I'm conscious! I'll ride Lobo Loco, the smartest cow hoss in the San Luis. He can hang on by his lip, if necessary. No mule, gents, no mule—mules are for fools, thass all—for crazy prospectors, mebbe, but not for me!"

"Why," spoke up President Warren, "that bandit and outlaw—curse him—that man Bancroft rides a big white mule, they tell me, and he should know what he's doing."

"What!" roared Shorty, "an' yuh want me to go wormin' up through the snow past them lonely cabins an' lonesome ranches, where the inmates are just waitin' for a chance to crack down with a rifle on somebody just for diversion, an' me whalin' a mule along so they'll think I am that Bancroft feller an' try to keep me from freezin' with some hot lead?"

"My point," said the president patiently, "was this: If a mule is safe for Bancroft, a robber, to ride through the winter wilderness, would a mule not be safe for you, too?"

"It would not," said Shorty decisively. "I want to be back here before Easter. Why, I'd get so impatient after the first mile I'd git off an' begin carryin' the mule and then them hillbillies would think I was plumb nuts!"

So, of course, Shorty had his way. And when he departed, with the pay roll, all in currency, in a leather case slung on a strap around his neck, he rode Lobo Loco, and he went out of town on a dead run, with the pony's breath visible on the sharp air like steam from a locomotive. Shorty had elected to leave at once, although it was late in the day. In that matter, too, he had overruled the pleas of the banker, silencing opposition by saying it was safer at night, on a winter trail, than in the day, when, if there was a bandit within a hundred miles he'd be expecting a payroll messenger far more than he would in the depths of a cold night.

The road down the valley, nine miles, to Oro, was fairly well open. The mail team from Alamosa had done that. But at Oro, where once a pioneer mining town had stood, in the days before Monte Vista was settled, Shorty struck off at right angles, and almost immediately Lobo Loco, his tried and true mustang,

dropped from a trot to a walk. It was all uphill from now on, and Shorty knew that he would find the going hard until he got to the top of Rabbit Ear pass, where, undoubtedly, the high winds had swept the trail clear of snow. Once there he would follow the trail along the spine of the mountain until he came to the short trail that led down to the Consolidated shacks.

"I should make it by dawn," decided Shorty, as he rode, his eyes closed to protect them from the glare of the snow, dazzling in the last rays of the sun. "But, Lobo, yuh mind yuhr p's an' q's, an' ef yuh slip yuh an' papa will be icicles till spring!"

Lobo twitched one ear knowingly, but that was lost on Shorty, who, blissfully confident in the horse's judgment, was already dozing in the saddle. He had learned that trick on the Rio Grande and made good use of it whenever he had any hard riding to do. Lobo Loco, smart cow horse that he was, seemed to know when it was up to him to pick trail and he always took the responsibility seriously. He poked along, but he kept on going, and even a snail will get there if it sticks to the job long enough.

When Shorty awoke, gradually, with a stifled yawn or two, and the repressed desire to stretch, night had already fallen, and the surroundings were ghostly, especially where the wind had whipped the snow into the pine boughs, enameling everything in a dazzling white. Lobo Loco was swinging up the trail he knew so well, and Shorty, thankful that the night was unusually warm for those regions, slipped back into the arms of sleep.

When he awoke a second time, much later, he did so with a start and a sinking sensation that all was not right. When he rubbed his eyes open and forced his mind to function he found that Lobo Loco had halted, ears pointed forward, and nostrils aquiver—sure signs of trouble ahead. A glance showed Shorty that they had reached a dismal part of the trail just under the brow of Rabbit Ear pass, where the way wound around cliffs and through dense thickets. Lobo Loco began to tremble under the saddle.

"Thar, thar, boy!" soothed Shorty, stroking the glossy neck, "reckon it's a cougar, or mebbe only a lynx. He won't hurt, yuh, Lobo. Let's mosey up a bit."

But the horse refused the invitation.

"Huh," said Shorty, stiffening, "then it is cougar, is it? Well, we ain't afraid o' him, ol' hoss."

Shorty touched Lobo with a spur and the horse shook his head angrily, but started forward, straining up the incline. Shorty, still drowsy, steadied his gaze up the trail expectantly.

But he was not prepared for what he saw.

There, coming toward him, out of a black thicket, was a strange apparition that seemed to be floating through the air. As it neared him Shorty made out the outlines of a man, especially the black slouch hat, but the man, thought the dazed Shorty, must be walking on stilts. It was only when the thing got almost upon him that Shorty saw the darker form of the rider was atop a huge white mule—a white mule!

At that moment Shorty's blood froze within him. Here, ahead of him, was undoubtedly Buck Bancroft, most feared of highwaymen, on whose head was a five-hundred-dollar reward.

The mule halted abruptly, and at that, just as Shorty himself had been awakened a few moments before, the stranger was roused into wakefulness. He wasted no time rubbing his eyes. There was a flash and Shorty was staring into the muzzle of a revolver, held on him over the mule's head.

"Welcome, pard, to the lonesome spaces!" said the stranger, in not unpleasant tones. "How come, where go?"

Shorty, mad at himself for not taking

advantage of the opportunity that had been manifestly his, before the mule had stopped and awakened its rider, was surly. "Yuh know well enough, Mister Bancroft!"

At that the road agent straightened in his saddle. "So!" he exclaimed. "Yuh know me, an' seem to think I should know where yuh are goin'! If I should know where yuh are goin' and don't, then it proves I must guess. Ef I should be wise to yuh, as yuh say yuh must be good pickin's."

Shorty shivered.

"Huh," said the stranger, "what's that in yuhr leather case thar, counselor? Are yuh goin' to court to help convict some client, or——"

He reached for the case and when he jerked it away he almost took Shorty's head with it.

"Shame on yuh for wakin' me up," said Bancroft. "I ain't had a good sleep for a week. Feel drowsy."

Shorty made no answer as Bancroft investigated the leather case.

"Dough, eh!" he exclaimed, after a hasty examination, during which he kept the worried Shorty still covered.

"Yuh said it," admitted Shorty, ruefully.

"Waal now," said Bancroft, well pleased at his luck, "I'm sure obliged to yuh, mister! Bringin' this up to me on a cold night, through the snow! I'm sure enough grateful. But thar's one thing, yuh must be my guest up to my cabin. I can't let yuh go back to town to report I held yuh up, when the roads are so pore for travelin'. Now, yuh'll just come with me, drop outta sight for a few days, an' the folks will decide a snow slide has swallered yuh up, hoss an' all, or else that yuh has flirted with temptation and she, yuh, an' the coin has gone over the hill together, to some healthier climate."

"Say," began Shorty. But he found, after all, that he had little to say about it. His self-appointed host quietly disarmed him and then invited him to get off Lobo Loco, and Shorty did.

"Yuh'll ride Rudolph, my mule," exclaimed the bandit suavely. "He's easy, an' slow. Ef yuh should try to git away on him I'd overtake yuh in an eighth of a mile on this hoss o' yuhrs. Besides, I'd rather ride a hoss."

"Me ride that mule!" cried Shorty.

"Sure enough!"

"Mules are fools an' for fools," stated Shorty, "an' I'll not ride—I'll walk."

"Thank yuh, thank yuh!" said Bancroft politely, as Shorty finally did climb onto the mule. "Yuhr warnin' is fully appreciated, mister, an' just so yuh don't try gittin' off——"

With that Bancroft deftly snatched a rope from the mule's saddle and before Shorty could figure it all out Bancroft had tied both of Shorty's legs together, at the ankles, under the mule's belly. Now he couldn't get off. But to make it even surer, the bandit tied Shorty's hands behind him.

"Yuh're my guest, mine an' Rudolph's," said Bancroft genially, "and a host must take good care o' his company!"

Then they started, back up the trail from whence the bandit had so recently come. Shorty sat stiffly on the big white mule, and led the way, while Bancroft, astride Lobo Loco, pressed up behind, chirping and chatting in happy manner.

"I was goin' down to rob a pore miner o' four or five dollars an' some grub," explained Bancroft, "an' then here yuh come, sayin', 'Please, Mister Bancroft, I'm achin' to be held up an' robbed' an' I accommodates. I always aims——"

"Shut up!" said Shorty.

"To accommodate my pals," went on Bancroft, ignoring Shorty's outburst. "When we git to my cabin I reckon I'll insist yuh stay a week, my dear Gaston. No, by golly, make it two weeks, my dear Alphonse. No, by golly, let's make it three weeks——"

"Dry up!"

"Or perhaps a month would be better! A month in the great open spaces, where the winter begins, an' where the snow is a little whiter an' the nights a little lighter——"

Shorty groaned. There he was, on a mule, all trussed up like a turkey going to the oven, and a bandit behind, with his pay-roll money, and alarming him with visions of a long imprisonment in some isolated cabin, where all the searchers in the world couldn't unearth him before the spring thaw.

"My dear man," the bandit was saying, "I surely appreciate——"

The mule slipped, and Shorty's heart pounded in his ears. They were crossing a shoulder of the mountain, where the snow was drifted across the narrow trail. There was a drop of a hundred feet or more immediately to the left.

"Thought mules never slipped," began Shorty, but he stopped at a whoop from Bancroft.

"Stand still, yuh dog-gone cayuse!" Bancroft was ordering Lobo Loco. "Quit yuhr slidin', confound yuhr hide!"

Sliding? Lobo Loco never slid anywhere. Just then the mule slipped again, and before Shorty could understand it all, he heard another yell from Bancroft.

"Ride, yuh nut!" came the shout. "It's a slide—a snow slide. It's just touchin' us now. Ride, or——"

Shorty did two things simultaneously. He dug his heels into the mule's ribs and he looked up the mountainside. That look satisfied him that he should have looked first and kicked the mule afterward. The whole white mountain seemed to be toppling down upon him, and the mule, aroused by the tattoo on his ribs, was plunging straight ahead, where the bulk of the slide would pass. It was too late to alter the program—besides, it was a mule. Shorty shot a quick glance over his shoulder to see Lobo Loco pivoting on his hind legs, his front legs thrashing the air. Whether the smart pony or the wise rider had decided, at that second, that rushing ahead would be fatal, Shorty couldn't tell. But even as he looked, with the first rush of the snow sweeping under the mule's belly, Shorty saw Lobo Loco get all four feet on the trail and head back down the mountain at breakneck speed, the pay-roll case flying out on the breeze from its place around the bandit's shoulder.

Then the slide struck. Smothered in a fleecy, unreal substance, Shorty felt himself and the mule swept over the edge of the cliff, but the expected drop failed to materialize. Instead it seemed as if they were on a great toboggan and they rolled over and over, slowly, cushioned in soft snow, soft, wet snow, loosened above by the warm night and now seeking a level in the ravines far below. Over and over rolled Shorty and Rudolph together, for Shorty was securely tied to the white mule. The mule seemed to take the matter philosophically enough, and it was Shorty who opened his mouth to shout and got it full of snow.

On and on they rolled, to come up at last with a gentle thud against something hard and unyielding. Shorty, with his hands tied, worked his head and shoulders until he had wormed his nose and chin to the surface. The mule, feeling the necessity of breathing, too, thrashed around without footing until he managed to thrust his head up through the snow. That move elevated the hapless Shorty far enough for him to get his chin above the surface, but what a disappointment the view from there was!

They were in a pocket, beneath two saplings. The saplings were already creaking and groaning under the weight of the snow that was pushing down upon them from up the slope. Once those saplings cracked the avalanche would descend and when that happened——

"Mule," said Shorty, briefly, "yuh're a fool. Just like I always said. A fool! Now that Lobo Loco o' mine, I reckon

he's beat it out safe with that derned thief and my pay-roll money."

Shorty winced at the next thought, but he spoke it. "They'll find us in the spring—an' bury me!" He shuddered and spoke again. "Mebbe they won't know which is me an' which is mule. Like as not we look alike. We must be brothers—me ridin' up that trail asleep with dough and bein' took——"

Shorty stopped with a blissful sensation. He had worked his feet loose. He spread them and there was no restraint. The knot had slipped or something. Meantime the saplings creaked and complained of the burden they bore.

Dawn came, finally, but it found Shorty still on the mule's back. The mule was dozing. He had thrashed and slashed in vain for secure footing and had found none. Shorty, taking the hint, decided that it would be unwise to get off the mule's back, especially since there seemed to be no bottom to the snow. The saplings creaked and protested louder than ever.

Day, and the sun, brought Shorty courage. Besides, he was growing hungry. He slipped off, awkwardly, because of his tied hands, and he sank immediately.

But he was too hungry to die just then. He rolled and in a minute felt hard ground under him. He got to his feet and pushed up through the snow crust and emerged, covered with sparkling crystals, three yards below the struggling mule. The mule looked at him in a startled way.

"It's just me!" explained Shorty.

The mule, at that, laid his long ears back along his quivering neck, raised his hideous upper lip from yellowed teeth, opened his mouth, sucked in a huge breath and then blared forth a blood-curdling clarion of recognition.

The mighty hee haw echoed up and reverberated against the cliffs half a mile above, where the trail was.

"Good gosh!" cried Shorty, his ear drums splitting as he ducked under the snow.

When he came up again, from his knees, on which he had crouched, the mule eyed him again in astonishment.

"It's me, yuh fool!"

And at that, in joyous enthusiasm, Rudolph laid back his velvety ears, bared his yellow teeth and sucking in plenty of air, gave Shorty another thundering salute.

"My ears!" yelped Shorty, ducking. He stayed under, then, for a minute or two, while he heard the muffled rejoicings of the blatant jackass, and when the outburst of mule music had ceased, Shorty came up for air.

Again the mule looked askance at him.

"Yuh crazy fool," blurted the shivering Shorty, as he essayed a step, only to sink into yielding snow, "it's me."

And again Rudolph brayed his recognition.

Then the spirit of the thing came upon Shorty. He had explored in all directions and found nothing but deep snow. Evidently he was marooned on a huge rock and hemmed in on all sides. There was no escape. He could not see the trail from where he was. Besides, there would be nobody on it unless it was the bandit, who, due to Lobo Loco's sagacity, might have escaped the slide. And if the bandit was on the trail he wouldn't care about aiding his late victim. No, nothing to do but perish, decided Shorty, and what could be nicer, under the circumstances, than passing out with the asinine trumpeting of a jackass as a funeral dirge?

Shorty ducked, to pop up again in a second, and the movement was greeted by a reverberating bray from Rudolph. The mule seemed to enjoy the game, too. He brayed and he brayed, as Shorty ducked out of sight and then popped up again in a man-and-mule game of "I spy!" Rudolph seemed content to die proclaiming his amusement to the world of barren snow and ice.

"That's right, yuh blamed fool mule," cried Shorty, "laugh at me! I'm a fool, too, I reckon. Us fools must play!"

And with that Shorty resumed his jack-in-the-box antics, while Rudolph grew hoarse in his merriment.

An hour and Shorty's movements had slowed down a bit, but not so Rudolph's. He was wheezy now, and rather incoherent, but he still blared forth a husky bray at every opportunity.

"Hee-ee-ee haw!" he roared. "H-a-aaa-aw he-ee-e haw, haw, hee-ee-ee-ee haw!"

"Laugh, yuh fool!"

When Shorty ducked again he sat on his haunches longer than usual under the snow, scratching at the surface of the rock on which he was perched, endeavoring to discover the character of the formation, cliff, river rock, or what, and while so engaged he heard Rudolph blare forth another hoarse trumpeting, although he had not popped up. The mule was getting anxious, thought Shorty. Well, to ease his fears——

Up went Shorty, stiff, but playful. Then he rubbed his eyes quickly. Up the slope, coming toward him, along a rope, were three black figures. Rudolph had spotted them and had given them a welcoming bray and he brayed again now just in time to drown out Shorty's hoarse shout of happiness.

It was Sheriff Joe Cook and two Monte Vista men!

Down they came, floundering and skidding, but secure along the rope. They made their way slowly to Shorty, and Shorty saw that there were other men up on the trail, holding the rope and leaning over to watch the progress of the sheriff and his two aides. Shorty stifled a great sob, and tears welled up into his eyes as Sheriff Cook, navigating the great drift between the mule and Shorty, reached the rock. In a moment the other two men were on the rock.

"Thnak goodness, yuh come!" cried Shorty, blubbering like a kid. "I sure had my mind all made up to die here in the snow, with nuthin' but a mule for company."

"Yuh sure got inter a nice mess," commented the sheriff, and Shorty realized that in the joyous prospect of being rescued he had forgotten that he had been held up and had lost three thousand dollars of the Consolidated mines pay roll. He wilted at the thought of it now.

"Yes sir," admitted Shorty, "I sure did get into a nice mess. How did yuh happen to start up the trail?"

Sheriff Cook clutched him by the shoulders. "That hoss o' yuhrs, Shorty, that Lobo Loco, he came tearin' in afore dawn this mawnin', runnin' like the wind itself."

Shorty's face lit up. "So he got away, did he?" he cried. "Smart hoss. Blamed smart hoss—smarter'n any fool mule." Shorty cast a contemptuous glance at Rudolph.

"He didn't get away from the bandit, ef that's what yuh mean," corrected Sheriff Cook. "He brought Bancroft in. Guess Bancroft was asleep in the saddle, an' Lobo scraped him off as he bolted under the door into the stable. The jolt stunned Bancroft an' the rumpus aroused some folks, an' we found Bancroft on the ground——"

"Get the dough back?" asked Shorty.

"Sure enough. Then, knowin' something had happened to yuh we started out to look fer yuh, but——"

"Smart hoss, smart hoss!" cried Shorty, louder than ever now as he recognized Bradley and Robinson of the bank on the trail high above. "Blamed smart hoss—smarter'n any mule—any two mules—any three mules—as ever lived. Lobo Loco takes Bancroft in. Reckon we splits that five-hundred-dollar reward. An' lookit this ol' fool mule here—all he got me into was trouble. Lookit that empty-lookin' mug, them ears——"

"Huh," said Sheriff Cook solemnly, "yuh can thank *this* mule, Shorty, that

we found yuh. We'd been clear up the trail to the mines an' hadn't spotted yuh, an' we was headed back to town when we heard the foghorn o' this ol' mule. He kept signalin' at intervals, an' we follered his bray until we locates yuh an' him."

"He was laughin' at me," said Shorty. "The ol' fool was laughin' his head off at me."

"Fool er no fool, that mule saved yuhr life," said the sheriff, "an' yuh're a fool ef yuh don't believe it. A fool that's all."

"I believe it, but I'm a fool," answered Shorty, and there were tears in his eyes. "I'm just fool enough to insist, gents, that Rudolph be hauled up first. Mules first, is my motter; I refuses to be saved until my pal, Rudy, is saved first! An' I'm hereby apologizin' to Rudy an' to all mules in general for anything I may have said agin' 'em. My hoss Lobo Loco is smart, blamed smart, but here while I was duckin' up and down in the snow, not havin' sense enough to holler for help, wise ol' Rudy here was broadcastin' a distress call fer an hour an' I didn't know it. Up with him, gents, git a rope around him. Women an' children—naw, confound it, guess I'm excited—mules first, by golly, especially a smart mule like Rudy. Rudy, I—I—well, I just can't tell yuh how——"

And Rudolph, laying back his ears, raised a quivering upper lip over yellow teeth, sucking in a mighty breath.

"Haw he-ee-ee haw!" he brayed.

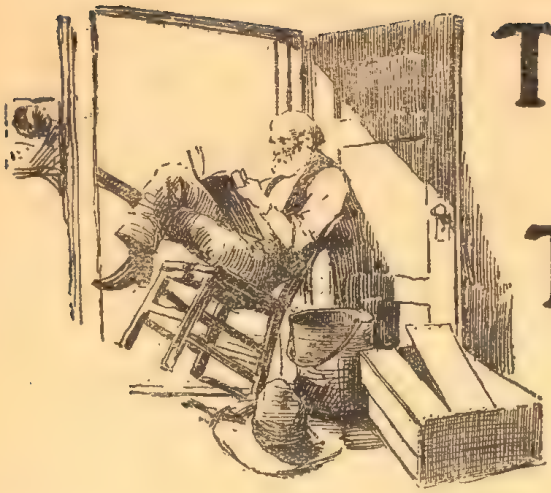
## ARIZONA'S WILD HORSES

WILD horses, probably to the number of several hundred, are at large in various parts of the State of Arizona. Some months ago a complaint reached Charles T. Francis, secretary of the State Live Stock Sanitary Board, that a herd of wild horses was tearing down fences and attacking tame stock in northern Maricopa County. The ranchers complained that the wild horses used the range and watering places intended for tame stock.

These horses can be captured, and should be captured, according to Mr. Francis, but the problem is what to do with them after they are safely corralled. The horses are said to be absolutely worthless, and you can't give them away, much less sell them. To slaughter them is inhuman, and probably against the law. They cannot be shipped somewhere else and turned loose, because the other sections would complain, and because a wild horse is like a cat—it always comes back.

To confirm his judgment of the worthlessness of these wild horses, Mr. Francis tells of an experience he had some two years ago. A number of traders agreed to pay the cost of rounding up some wild horses, amounting to less than fifty cents a head, if the officials would undertake to deliver the horses. About six hundred were rounded up and turned over to the traders. They announced that they would give them to the Indians in exchange for blankets.

The horses were taken to a point near a reservation three hundred miles away. The proposition was made to the Indians, but the latter declared they would not give a single blanket for the whole herd. They also cautioned the traders not to leave the horses to wander on their reservation. When the Indians refused to accept the animals as a gift, the wild horses were turned loose. In less than a month four hundred of them had found their way back to the old range, a distance of three hundred miles.



# The Mirrors of Three Pines

## A Peg Leg Story

By F. R. Buckley

*Author of "Peg Leg Aids a Pilgrim," etc.*

I WAS sitting in the doorway of my international emporium and sheriff's office, reading the encyclopedia, or perhaps dozing over it, with my peg leg up against the right-hand doorpost and the other one wrapped around it, when this Charlie Banks came charging in, uttering strange noises, and apparently in a great hurry to get somewhere to kill something.

In the heat of his passion he did not notice such a small thing as myself, so that he tripped over my intertwined underpinnings and executed something in the nature of a cropper on the floor. Three Pines County having been in rather a disturbed state recently, and one of my revolvers happening to fly into one hand as the encyclopedia flew out of the other, I naturally fired a couple of shots while still half awake, just to convince whoever it was that I retained my faculties. One of the bullets, certainly not weighing more than an ounce, and traveling at considerably less than one thousand feet per second, happened to plow through the floor half an inch from Banks' ear; and though the whole business was entirely his fault, I ask you to believe that I never saw a man so upset in my life.

He got to his feet absolutely taciturn with rage, a condition which unfortunately did not last more than about ten seconds. At the end of that time, he began to talk, and where the son of a respectable political boss can have learned such language I'm sure I don't know—unless by reading campaign speeches.

"You fuzzy-whiskered old peril to navigation," ran his remarks in part. "You book-reading, chair-warming, door-stopping, lazy-boned old human man trap. You paralytic spring gun."

"Down, Towser," says I, patting him on the head in a fatherly manner with the gun barrel. "Peace, peace. Collect your faculties. Count up to ten. Think of the birdies and the flowers for a few minutes and then try to express your thoughts without stammering."

"My father will be here in a few minutes," says Charlie, fixing me with an eye like a tulip bulb.

"Let us hope he finds you still living," says I.

"I was robbed this morning," says Charlie Banks.

"It's only half past six now," I remarked. "You certainly have been making the best possible use of your time. Were there any other particulars?"

"By *him*," roars Charlie Banks.

At this I reflectively put the gun back

into its holster. "You mean the Beehive Bandit," I suggested.

"Of course I do," says Charlie, getting to his feet, covered with dust and with cigarette butts clinging to his hair in rich profusion. "Now I'm going to tell you, Mr. Garfield, it's an outrage."

"You don't need to tell me," I said mildly. "I know it."

"I don't mean the robbery, either," said Charlie Banks. "I meant the way you've been acting about this business. Here the whole county's absolutely certain that this bandit is either Tommy Meyers or Edward Wilson, one of only two men, which isn't such a crowd to choose from, and you sit here, reading the encyclopedia, and tripping people up and doing practically nothing whatever to decide which of them it is and arrest him."

I suppose he saw that his remarks didn't make such a hit with me, after all the trouble I'd had with this case during a singularly rheumatic month, so he hastened to add that his father was of the same opinion as himself.

"He naturally would be," said I, gazing at Charlie in a brooding manner. "I was just reading in the encyclopedia about the transmission of mental defects by heredity. If I'm not mistaken, here's your papa now, dismounting on my porch steps as if lumber still cost as little as it did when he was an honest man. Come on in, Mr. Banks. Bring all the other rioters. I was just explaining to your son, first, that the smaller the crowd of suspects in a case, the more difficult it is to pick the criminal out of it; second, that the whole county's opinion doesn't make good evidence on a criminal charge, and third, that while I remain sheriff of this county, and while it's my bond that goes up the spout in the event of any false arrests, I shall run the office according to my own ideas and not according to those of anybody else. I'm glad you arrived in time to hear this explanation."

Old man Banks chewed his mustache pretty viciously and looked at me more viciously still, but I guess there must have been something in my eye. Anyway, he didn't continue with the topic his son had started.

"Did Charlie tell you he'd been robbed?"

"Yes," says I, "but he didn't say of what."

"Well, it was of a genuine, two-carat, platinum engagement ring," says old man Banks, in a tone which convinced me it was his money which had paid for it. "My son was taking it over to the Cross O, to present it to Mamie Wills, they having become engaged last night, when he was held up by this Beehive Bandit and it taken away from him."

"Engaged?" says I. "Why, I thought the Cross O competition was between Tommy Meyers and Edward Wilson."

"So it was," growls old man Banks, "until both those guys got suspected of putting beehive-shaped pillowcases over their heads and setting up as highway robbers. Then my son's honest devotion came into its own."

I couldn't help smiling at the idea of Charlie Banks being devoted to anything but himself. This seemed to irritate his father.

"And if any further proof was required," says he, "that one of these two fellows is the bandit, I should think you now have it. Charlie gets engaged over the heads of these two—nobody else—and immediately he's robbed. I should think that would be enough proof for anybody."

"The only thing left unproved," I said diffidently, "being which of the two it is. The old, old question."

"Well, I should think——" began Charlie Banks.

"Yes, you should," I told him. "You really should. So should your father, if you will forgive my making the suggestion; and I don't believe it would do any harm if this highly illegal posse he

has collected, did it once in a while. After you've left here, which I hope you will do within three minutes; you might gather in a circle and have a thinking party. You might figure out how I'm going to tell which of those guys is the guilty one when not one physical characteristic of this bandit has ever been seen through his disguise; when neither of the suspects will incriminate the other on account of its being unsportsmanlike when they're both after the same girl; considering also that these robberies have never taken place except when they were both absent, and also remembering that the capture of this Beehive guy is a serious undertaking in itself; not to mention the possibility of false arrest. Look at that time we had him cornered on Bald Knob. He shot three men while they were trying to figure out whether they had the right man or not, and beat it before anybody could come to a decision."

There was a short silence after this.

"Well, you'll never catch him by sitting here and reading the encyclopedia," says Charlie Banks.

"You never can tell," says I.

II.

About four o'clock that afternoon, the already annoying situation was complicated by the arrival of Mamie Wills. Nominally she came over to buy a pound of laundry soap, but actually the idea was to beg me to hurry up and arrest the Beehive Bandit, so that she could marry whichever of her two earlier admirers it wasn't.

"You seem kind of unbiased," says I, producing the laundry soap and wondering at the fate which always brings some woman to weep on my store counter when it's been newly varnished.

"I'm not," says Mamie. "Of course it's Tommy Meyers I love. I never did like dark men, but either of them is better than that ho-ho-rrible Charlie Banks."

"Well, if you like fair men," says I, "you certainly couldn't do better than Tommy Meyers. That's right, too."

She wept on and on.

"But such being the case," says I, "why do you go and engage yourself to Banks? This question of who's who must be settled some time or other. Why not wait?"

"My aunt left me fifty thousand dollars, provided I was married before my twenty-second birthday," says Mamie drearily. "Father needs the money and my birthday's the day after to-morrow."

There you are, you see. The leaving of money to people certainly does seem to be a dirty trick. My enemies please note. While I was thinking of this, Mamie astonished me by rising and flinging both arms around my neck. This seems to have become a popular amusement of young ladies in distress around our neighborhood. From previous experience, moreover, I knew exactly what she was going to say.

"Oh, Uncle Bill," she sobbed, "I can't marry that Banks beast. Promise me you won't let me."

"Well," says I, doubtfully.

She snuggled her head into my shoulder and clung to me tigher still.

"Promise," she demanded through three layers of corduroy.

"My dear girl," says I, a trifle irritably.

"Promise," says Mamie, "*dear* Uncle Bill."

"The only way I could do any good," I snapped, "would be by separating the sheep from the goat, which means catching this bandit, which——"

"O—oh, promise."

"All right, all right, all right," says I, desperately, as her tears finally penetrated my shirt and started to trickle down my back—in which I have rheumatism enough at the best of times.

She executed about four more sobs

and detached herself. Then, having wiped her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief, tucked a couple of stray curls back over her ears and powdered her nose at my shaving mirror, she stood around in the obvious expectation of seeing me perform a voodoo or something instantaneously. I don't know which of my constituency is the most annoying, the gang that thinks I'm an abject fool who ought to be quietly poleaxed, or the gang which believes me to be a blend of King Solomon, Sherlock Holmes, Sampson and Jack the Giant Killer.

Mamie Wills seemed to take it as a personal affront that I should sit down and prepare to pick up the encyclopedia instead of doing something such as, for instance, putting on all my guns, springing on all my ponies and galloping round and round the store in circles.

I thought, for a blissful moment, that she was going to give me a bawling-out similar to that awarded by the Banks family, in which case I could have got peevish, revoked my promise and thus got easily out of an exceedingly awkward situation.

However, Mamie said nothing. She merely stood there while I read a column and a half, then she started to sob again, and then she walked out of the store and mounted her horse.

I had the pleasure of hearing these sobs growing fainter and fainter and more heartrending as her pony traveled the first quarter of a mile back to the Cross O.

III.

Well, I forgot who it was, Pluto, I think, or Cerberus, or one of those classic writers, that said it was impossible to have both mankind and the gods working for you simultaneously. I proved it true, all right. The very evening following Mamie's visit, my deputy, Jake Henson, sent a Mexican in to inform me that he and the gods working together had met this Beehive Bandit riding across the prairie in full regalia and had chased him into a cave in Dead Man's Gulch; at the mouth of which cave, he, Jake, was standing sentry, until such time as I should arrive with reinforcements, the case not being suitable for either single-handed or double-handed capture.

In the second place, on calling up "Pie-face" Lammermoor, Tom Lear, Marty O'Donnell and a few others, in the attempt to form a posse, I found that the Banks family had gummed the works for me to an almost incredible extent. Apparently they had spent the day assuring all and sundry that I had lost my mind, not to mention my manly vigor, by too much reading of the encyclopedia, and the propaganda had had its effect. Though under normal circumstances extremely respectful, and due to become so again as soon as I should have time to point out to them the error of their ways, Pie-faced Lammermoor & Co. gently but firmly refused to go out with me that evening; and obviously it was that evening that the bandit had to be captured, if at all.

I explained this rather forcibly over the telephone and was awarded the raspberry, both by Pie-face and by the young lady who operates the telephone.

"I understand, Bill," said Pie-face, "that only as recently as this morning you assured the Bankses that you were perfectly capable of capturing anything on two legs with no other assistance than that of an encyclopedia, and that the less assistance you had from pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, dish-faced abominations like me and the rest of the boys, the better you would like it. All I'm asking you to do, Bill, in view of the fact that I have a heavy cold in the head and do not like being shot to death even when in the best of health and in spirits, is to go ahead and make good on your remarks. You must have twenty-six volumes of the encyclopedia left,

even after busting that one on my head last Wednesday, and that ought to be help enough for you. Good evening."

"You know there's a thousand-dollar reward out," I said hastily.

"Yes," says Pie-face, "and how glad you ought to be that you'll have the encyclopedia to divide it with!"

"You think you're smart, don't you?" I snarled.

"By no means," says Pie-face. "If I had to get as good a shot as that Beehive Bandit guy out of a cavern like that Dead Man's Gulch one, I should want the assistance of at least twenty or thirty able-bodied men. If you can do it with some books of reference, you're a smart guy, Mr. Garfield. I hand it to you. Good evening."

"You——" I began, and it was at this point or a few seconds later, that the young lady operator started quoting the company's rules at me in an indignant tone of voice. Even riding alone toward certain death across prairies filled with an ice-cold night mist was preferable to staying there and listening to her, so I put on my gun belt, mounted my pony and started off to join Jake Henson.

I found him sitting behind a large rock, shivering violently, partly from the cold and partly from the fact that though the night was pitch dark, the bandit in the cave had managed to land four high-velocity rifle bullets in such a position that Jake, although protected from a direct hit, had been plentifully showered with red-hot shreds of metal.

"Switch that flash light off," roared my deputy, as I endeavored to examine his wounds. "You darned old fool, turning up here without a posse, and that——"

My attention to the remainder of his sentence was rather lessened by the fact that three bullets in succession passed through my left side whisker, so close together both in time and grouping as to convince me that the man in the cave was armed with an auto-loading rifle—one of those infernal things that do everything automatically, except sight themselves and pull their own triggers. And for the benefit of those who have had the good fortune never to be peace officers, I will here remark that while a man with an ordinary rifle gives you one chance in a thousand to rush him while he is working his lever, one of these auto-loading blighters has no interval of silence at all.

I sat down with Jake behind the rock.

"I should have thought——" said Jake.

"Shut up," says I. "Let me think."

I thought for about five seconds without interruption, and then, just as I was on the brink of conceiving a plan, a rattle of loose stones informed me that the bandit was endeavoring to sneak out of the cave while our backs were turned. And Jake was all for letting him go. By turning the flash light on the top of my deputy's head, however, I convinced him it was better to gird up his loins and fight rather than be shot sitting; and after an exceedingly hot five minutes I further convinced the bandit that there were worse places than his cave. He dived back into it and for some few seconds, I hoped that he would call me opprobrious names, thus enabling me to identify him by his voice, but he didn't. The only thing that spoke was that infernal auto-loading rifle.

"Well, I'll be——" said Jake, as we sat down again under the rock.

"Shut up," I repeated, thoughtfully. And after a bare thirty seconds of intense brain work, I got the plan all fixed.

It was simplicity itself, the idea being simply to fix the flashlight so that the bandit could see its glow without actually having the light for a target, and to let him shoot at its while Jake and I made detours to the left and right and

took him on both flanks at the same time.

It would have been an exceedingly good plan if the man in the cave hadn't been such a genius at shooting around corners or if Jake had been a little quicker-witted. As it was, however, a bullet or the spatter of a bullet knocked the flash light out of the position in which I had placed it, into one from which it shot a blinding gleam of light upon Jake and me just as we got halfway across a barren stretch without enough cover for a rattlesnake. And Jake, seeing the Beehive Bandit in the mouth of the cave with the rifle leveled at him personally, gave a yell and dropped on his stomach instead of starting a fusillade under cover of which I could have rushed.

The bandit, of course, was just as willing to shoot Jake lying down as standing up, and he did shoot him, a nasty, raking wound which, according to Doc Brewer, wouldn't have been half as bad if Jake had been erect; and what was worse, he had no sooner shot Jake, than he swung on his heel with the evident intention of putting one or more bullets through me, which he would certainly have done, in spite of my missing him six consecutive times with revolver bullets, if the flash light hadn't happened to be practically behind me, shining directly into his eyes. He must have hit the rock near it with his last shot, because, all of a sudden, the lamp rolled off its support and ceased to illumine the scene. I groped in the darkness until I found Jake, hoisted him onto my shoulder with considerable difficulty and then, without further ado, beat it for where our ponies were grazing at the head of the valley. From which point, having mounted one horse and tied Jake across the saddle of the other, I made the best of my way home.

All the boys who ought to have been out on posse with me were there, including the Bankses. For some reason or other, they seemed amused. The Bankses, even, continued to be amused after I had had Jake Henson carried in, and laid unconscious on the counter.

"Well, I see you didn't get him," said young Banks, laughingly. "And here's another annoying thing, Mr. Garfield. Father and I have been trying to help you out of your dilemna as far as possible, but on telephoning around, we find that both of the suspects are away from home to-night, so that it's still just as likely to be one of them as it is the other. And in view of the promise you gave to Miss Wills——"

He was interrupted at this point by the sudden pulling up of a horse outside the store, and a moment later something happened which was really quite sensational. More sensational, in fact, than any of those present thought it was, though their eyes bulged in a most generous manner.

I have stated that the identity of the bandit lay between Edward Wilson and Tommy Meyers. Well, at this moment, Edward Wilson, the dark man, walked, calmly smiling, into the store and asked for a sack of tobacco. The incident quite shook young Banks out of his company manners.

"Then the bandit must be that beautiful fair-haired favorite of Mamie's," he yelled exultingly. "Thank you for coming in just now, Mr. Wilson! Thank you! Thank you!"

He was just about to take Wilson's hand and in spite of the newcomer's puzzled expression, to shake it violently, when I, having remembered that my revolvers were empty, and having taken as much of a spring as one can with a wooden leg, interrupted the proceeding by landing full on Mr. Wilson's chest and bearing him to the floor. I hit him four times under the jaw with my right fist, and three times under the ear with my left, and then, picking myself up from the far side of the counter, whither he had hurled me bodily, as soon as

he realized what was going on, I hit him rather severely under the left eye with a large can of spinach. I threw the spinach because it happened to be the first thing at hand; but I couldn't have chosen a better missile if I'd pored over my stock for hours. Spinach is heavy in the first place, and in the second, spinach cans have very fine cutting edges. The effect of these two qualities upon Wilson was such that I had no difficulty thereafter in knocking his revolvers out of his hands with a Ford axle which I happened to find standing in a corner, and then poking him in the solar plexus with my peg leg. After this, he seemed too discouraged to resist the snapping of handcuffs upon his wrists, which formality I attended to without delay. My large and flabbergasted audience, meantime, expressing the conviction that I really had lost my wits.

"Are you arresting him?" asked Marty O'Donnell.

"So so," said I, wiping a cut on my forehead.

"As the bandit?" asked old man Banks.

"Not the less so," said I, "because he took the heroic step of following me all the way back from Dead Man's Gulch in an endeavor to establish an alibi."

"But how do you know it was him in Dead Man's Gulch?" asked Tom Lear, in the tone one uses when reasoning with a child. "You didn't get into the cave, did you?"

"*I* didn't," I responded, "but some light waves did."

"But," says Pie-face Lammermoor gently, "he didn't have that beehive disguise of his off, did he?"

"No," says I, "but since he was shooting at us, naturally he was looking through the eye holes of his mask and naturally the light was shining into his eyes, and of course you all know that a man's eyes reflect light just like a cat's do or a coyote's, only not so much so."

By this time the audience was silent, if not respectful.

"What you don't know, however," I continued, "is that this reflecting is done by the tapetum or tapestry of the inner eye, which varies in color not only between different species of animals, but also between different types of the same species. The reflection from the eyes of a brunette is crimson, while a blonde only reflects a kind of cherry red. When the bandit's eyes showed crimson, therefore, I deduced that I was dealing with a brunette; and when I knew that, I deduced that the bandit must be Edward Wilson; and look at the wretch now."

This time the audience was both silent and respectful, all except Charlie Banks, who was neither.

"And what made you so awfully clever?" says he.

An exceedingly good reply to this would have been to knock him down, but it seemed to me I had a better one, in view of his mocking remarks of that morning.

"The encyclopedia," I therefore said, stepping over to the telephone to tell Mamie Wills she could marry Tommy Meyers if she liked, "The encyclopedia!"

# Mountain Made

By

## George Owen Baxter

*Author of "Larramee's Ranch," etc.*

**Synopsis of Preceding Chapters**

WINSOR TERENCE GLANVIL is orphaned when a mere child, and he is eventually taken under the wing of a wealthy woman. He is given a splendid education and when, at twenty-one, this woman dies, he falls heir to her house and possessions, which he sells for fifty thousand dollars. With this in his pocket, he travels around the world, following a gambler's life.

Eventually he goes into the West, and there he schemes, together with one Santelle, to marry Louise Carney, a wealthy but very unsophisticated Western girl, whose father, before his death, had made a gold discovery. Santelle is to get a third of the money that is to fall to Winsor when he marries Louise.

A certain Jack Rutledge, however, who is in love with Louise, undertakes to prevent the scheming Winsor from carrying out his plans. Winsor arranges an immediate marriage with Louise.

His plans are frustrated, and he is ignominiously horsewhipped. Rutledge then disfigures Glanvile's face, and the latter gets his revenge by shooting it out with Rutledge. Glanvil makes his getaway and hides in a cave.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THE WOLF PROVIDES.

THERE began for Winsor Glanvil the existence not of a man but of a beast. Though food had brought him some strength, he was still filled with a deadly weakness, as though his blood had been turned to the palest, clearest water. Only by the most dreadful effort was he able to work off enough of the hide of the stag to furnish him with a buckskin jacket, and take sinew enough to supply him with thread—dried before the fire in front of the cave and made supple by rubbing in the fat of the deer's body. But still that hide had to cure in the sun, stretched out among four pegs which he had driven into the ground, and after that, it would have to be worked supple, and then sewed together before he could use it as a covering for his upper body.

In the meantime, he was half naked, and naked, above all, where his wounds most needed covering. From the flagellation, the muscles of his back were stiff, sore, weak; from the slashing teeth of the she-wolf, his shoulder was badly gashed. And these wounds were open to the air. In the heat of the day, he lay out in the sun, drinking up the heat which it showered down on him. But when the evening came, the mountain winds at once blew cold and sharp and found a way through the entrance to the cave, and brought up from the ground a deadly dampness which pene-

trated his body to the heart, and his spirit to the innermost soul. He could not sleep. If he warmed his shoulder at the blaze, his back began to ache. If he warmed his back, from the deeply gashed shoulder, shooting pains thrust themselves through and through him. So he drowsed before a wretched fire through the night, wondering what made him cling to existence so like a blind animal, when, by a stroke, he could end all of this misery and be free!

Ay, a dozen times he took up his rifle and looked calmly down into the black deeps of the barrel where death lay. But something held him back—not love of life—but an instinct lying even deeper than the thirst for life itself!

As for the fire, it was never a very successful thing. Sometimes sharp drafts blew through the entrance to the cave and thrust the flames aside, and usually, after it had been burning for a little while, a dense cloud of smoke gathered in the cave and made him lie down close to the ground in order to breathe. A horrible life, surely!

And ever he had with him the ceaseless anxiety as to the manner in which his wounds were healing. His back, he felt, was recovering slowly but surely, after the first severe inflammation subsided, but the wound in his left shoulder, as it began to heal, pulled horribly at his flesh, and the deep cuts in his thigh were beginning to fester. He warmed water, forced open the mouth of the wound, enduring the most horrible agony, and washed the interior of that hurt as well as he was able. But, a day later, a throbbing ache in it told him that he had not searched the cut deeply enough. For fear of death, he was forced to go to work again. He whittled two clean, thick-ended sticks. With these he forced the mouth of the wound to yawn wide open and he cleansed the inside of the hurt. Twice he fainted through the sheer weight of that pain. But he completed the operation, and the following day, he knew that he had effectually removed the danger of poisoning—at least, for the time being.

But he had before him, now, another vital danger, for the food supply was done, for him. The meat of the stag had turned so rank that he could no longer touch it. He had dried himself a small portion in the sun. If he had had the strength and the sense, he knew that he should have tried to cure the entire body in the same fashion, making it into jerky. He had not done so, and here was famine before him, again.

There was still a quantity of the flesh left, unspeakable to him, but apparently more acceptable than ever to the wolves. By this time, the wounds of the wolf had responded most marvelously to his first care. She was able to turn and lick them, as they began to close and heal. Her returning strength enabled her to rise and walk from place to place, though slowly and stiffly, and, as her strength returned, there seemed to return with it a greater distrust of him. She never went near him of her own volition. But now and then, as she dragged herself past him at the mouth of the cave to lie in the sun, which was curing her wounds as it was curing the wounds of the man, she submitted to the touch of his hand—submitted, always, with a sinking of her whole body, and a lightning turn of the head, and baring of the fangs.

As for the cub, that was another matter. He was turning dark and darker every day, and promised to be that prized rarity of the trapper, a black wolf. Every day, too, he grew visibly bigger, visibly brighter, visibly more interested and more daringly familiar with this new member of the family.

For if the mother wolf were a wise creature, full of lore for the young wolf to learn, the man was a thing of utter mystery, to be wondered over, to be reverenced. The man had no gaping

rows of teeth; his mouth was not a weapon; he was a poor, weak, slow-moving thing. When the scent of game came fresh and heavy on the evening wind, through the mouth of the cave, he showed no emotion at all; and even when the dreadful odor of the grizzly was wafted into the cave as the king of the forest and the mountain-desert strode by, the stranger did not cower in terror.

But he carried with him a thing which made a noise like small thunder and that killed with a flash, leaving behind only a pungent, stinging breath to tell of the work it had accomplished. And he carried, too, a long and shining tooth more trenchant, far, than even the fangs of mother wolf, which could hamstring a steer at a single stroke. With that tooth, he could slash through tough wood; and whenever mother wolf smelled it, she shrank, and her hair bristled. And whenever she saw it bared, she cowered and snarled, and her eyes turned green. So that the cub learned to dread the knife by watching his mother. He knew that it meant trouble of some kind.

The man himself was a thing to be dreaded, no doubt. For mother wolf acted as though he were the living lightning bolt itself! But the cub could not understand this. Indeed, there was nothing about the man which he could understand. Only he knew that when the hand of Glanvil touched his head and ran down his neck and along his back, a thrill of joy passed through all of his body, and when the voice of Glanvil sounded soft and deep in his throat, something like a sweet, hushed echo of the sound passed through the little wolf's body and into his heart. And, just as that tender-touching hand could arm itself with the metal stick that slew afar, or with the long bright tooth of steel, so the voice itself could change and ring with a command that made the cub's tail drop between his legs and brought him swiftly to the feet of the man, full of awe, full of fear.

He was a tyrant, too, this creature which lifted its forelegs and walked upon its hind legs only. Behold how, at times, it spoke with a light voice and moved a dancing hand that invited one to play, to frolic about, to lay hold with teeth. But if those teeth closed a trifle too hard, instantly the voice turned sharp with a ring like the ring of metal against metal, and the hand struck! And if, in response, he snapped at the hand which struck, the hand forthwith armed itself with a stout stick, and he, the son of the wild wolf, was caught by the scruff of the neck, and beaten until he licked the dreadful hand and promised obedience and gentleness thereafter.

After such tyranny, there were rewards, too. There were strokings of the hand, there was the gentle voice which touched his heart again. There were bits of meat given from the finger tips. Sometimes mother wolf, at the beginning, had snarled horribly, deep in her throat, when she saw the man handle her cub so roughly. Sometimes she had drawn near, dragging herself on her belly, her weakened limbs trembling as she strove to gather them for a spring that would launch her at his throat. But, after a time, she seemed to take it as a matter of course, and she would lie by grinning wide, as though she said to herself: "This is well—this is a lesson in the lore of man. How mysterious are his ways, and how wise! The cub learns apace! This is well!"

In the meantime, mother wolf grew stronger and stronger still. No nurse however skillful supplies what nature has given to its wild things—the ability to cure their own hurts swiftly. The wounds closed as by magic. With good food and plenty of it, her roughly staring coat grew smoother, her belly grew fat, her eye brightened, and some of the stiffness was leaving her step.

But the food gave out; the mother minded not these famines. One large meal in a week's time was enough for her, but for the cub, that was quite another matter, for it needed sustenance on account of its growing bulk as well as on account of the daily expenditure of its strength playing and gamboling every day in front of the cave.

So, at night, they lay down near the warmth of the fire, the she-wolf, the man, and the cub nearest the flame, with its nose tucked into the deerskin jacket which now covered his nakedness.

But the food was gone, and Winsor Glanvil could not renew the supply. All day he lay near the mouth of the cave, or else he ventured out as far as he dared to drag his wounded leg, ventured out with infinite agonies. But he found nothing; only the trail of the mountain grouse in the grass told of food on foot near him. He wondered at the absence of all other living things near him; how could he know that the message had gone abroad, and that from the smoke of his fire near the mouth of the cave the message had gone abroad through the woods, lingering for the nose of every wild creature to read it plainly: "Man has come! Beware! Beware!"

Two days he lay thus in the open, and a third day brought nothing.

Then, in the dusk, mother wolf rose and shook her stiff flanks and stalked forth. She was gone until midnight, and then she returned and dropped wearily on the floor of the cave. Before the cub she had laid the body of a jack rabbit. What stealthy hunting had given her such a prize, the man could not guess. Certainly speed had never won it for her. But the kill was new, and the body was limp and warm. He took away from the ravenous cub enough to make a meal for himself and roasted the flesh at his fire. Then he sat up and thought over his problems.

He had been here many days, now, and it would be many days more before he was healed enough to leave the place definitely. There seemed no progress for the better in his wounded thigh, though his back was fast recovering. It might be weary long weeks before he could walk easily, to say nothing of running. Even if he could find game to shoot, his ammunition might give out. He must find some other means of gaining a livelihood—some other means, too, to help the weak mother support her cub.

For if he had helped her, she, in turn, had helped him. In time of need he had given her food that saved her life. In time of need when he was famished, she had brought flesh to him, also! A deep and quiet wonder passed through the soul of the man. Indeed, what a fool he had been to question that there is justice in the world when among the very dumb beasts of the universe there is such a scrupulous desire to return good for good and even good for evil. For he had invaded her home, he had struck her down in misery and brought her near to death. Now she carried home food for her cub, and for the man who had injured her! Glanvil felt a little awed as he considered it.

But it came to Glanvil, at the last, that there are other weapons than knife and gun. There is rod and line—there is the trap. He made little wooden snares along the trails of the grouse in the grass and caught the great fat birds easily enough. He cut with his knife stout hooks out of the bone of the deer's skeleton. Trailers from strong vines were his lines. A little down the mountainside a stream rushed by with murmur and shout, and on the bank of it he lay to fish. The little fish he cast over his shoulder. And mother wolf, lying there with pricked ears, watching, delighted with this master work, caught them out of the air and swallowed them. Or else the growing cub snatched them and tore them to bits. The larger fish he brought back and roasted to a de-

licious tenderness in the coals and the ashes of his fire.

These were uninvaded preserves. Man had not been this way to hunt for pleasure very often, and Glanvil only had to reach forth and take what he would.

And, in those happy evenings, when he sat near the fire, with the well-fed wolf beside him, and the well-fed cub prowling and gamboling near by, he looked upon himself as though from afar and wondered. He, from the plains, had looked up many a time to these mountains and thought them now bare and stiffly cold and uninviting. Yet had he been thrown down in a city among men, could he have found his living with his bare hands?

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TEACHING THE CUB.

TEDIOUS weeks must pass for even the cleanest bullet wound to heal, when it has cut deep through human flesh; but the wound in the thigh of Glanvil was a poisoned one to begin with, and he had no healing drugs to lay upon it in the second place. Neither could he lie still to allow it to heal. Flat upon his back he should have lain for days and days. But in the cave and out of it, he was forced to stir constantly, fighting for the food which kept him alive.

So the whip cuts on his back healed first and grew sound. And the corrugated scar from the spur cut healed on his face next. Thirdly the slash of the wolf's fangs closed and grew sound in his left shoulder. But as for the wound in his thigh, surely it progressed, and yet from day to day, as he examined it, it seemed to him that it made no progress. Still he could not walk except with an individual effort for every step.

A journey of half a mile would have been to him an endless trip. He dared not look forward to it without a shudder. Sometimes he thought of trying to make a signal to other men by building a great fire on the mountaintop, and repeating it every night until help came to him, as it surely would. But he told himself that if help came, the men would carry him back to civilization only to try him for the slaying of big Jack Rutledge.

No, with all the miseries which he was forced to endure, it was better to remain where he was.

The weeks turned into months; the summer ended; the sharp nights told of autumn. How long he had been there, he could not tell. But he knew that mother wolf was long ago healed. She slid back and forth to the cave and out again with a silken smoothness. She was fat, strong as a lioness, for her own hunting was only for her pleasure and to give her variety, perhaps. As for the necessities of life, she had food enough from the fishing and the trapping of her human companion.

So did the black cub. What with all the food he could gorge—a rare, rare thing in the history of any young wolf—and nothing to do except find exercise and pleasure where he would, the cub had grown amazingly. He had a black coat, now, a thick, deep undercoat of fur for the winter which was coming, and the longer hairs were tipped with white. So, prospering in food and a happy home, with a great frame given him by a giant mother and perhaps a still more gigantic father, he promised to be a monster indeed of his race. And the man watched him with pride.

He left the cave in the company of his mother, now. Sometimes they were gone for two or three days at a time, and when they came back often their sides were leaner, and always their eyes were wilder. But, as a rule, there was a fleck of dark blood on the coat of the black wolf, and the man knew that he had killed for himself.

Then, on a night, the wind blew up cold and sharp; and when the morning came, he found that all of the mountains were white with snow. It was a gloomy spectacle for Glanvil. That day he tried his strength down the mountainside, but when he had covered a few furlongs, he was forced to turn back, and it took him until dark to regain shelter, regain it on his hands and knees, dragging a numbed, useless leg behind him.

It required a week to undo the disastrous effects of that sally from the cave, and when the week was over—a week of wretched starvation and suffering—he found that the mountains were knee-deep in snow. He was snow-bound for God alone could tell how long a time to come!

There followed for Glanvil a season of the blackest despair. A season of near starvation, too. But the very pangs of hunger at last forced him out to make an effort for his life, and he was rewarded at once. On his very first expedition, not a hundred paces from the entrance to the cave—upwind, according to the prevailing gales, he saw a thin column of steam arising from between two naked old trees and the air, when he drew near, was rank with the smell of bear.

Mother wolf, following at his heels, snarled and fled with her tail between her legs, but the Silver King, as he had come to call the cub, remained near by, curious though frightened. To Glanvil, it was danger indeed, but it was possibly a supply of food, and therefore he ventured the chance. A stone or two thrown at the right place and the shouting which he raised, suddenly brought forth a fine young grizzly, newly entered upon his winter's sleep, and with fat rolling sides from the last of his labors among the nuts and the roots and the insects of the late fall.

He stood blinking in the morning sun, bewildered, but growling, still half stupefied with sleep. And he was an easy mark for Glanvil. Down in the snow the man sank, steadied the gun, and fired. The first shot brought the grizzly lumbering toward him with a roar that sent Silver King squealing for shelter. The second shot brought him down in his tracks.

An hour later the man was dining on roasted bear's meat. Then, the rest of that day and all of the next, he was laboring at the enormous skin, worth more than gold to him for the rigors of the winter that lay ahead. By dint of prying the body over with long poles, he managed to turn the skin loose, at the last, and peg it down in the floor of the cave to cure by the heat of the fire. Thereafter, for a week or more—the count of days meant nothing to Glanvil now—he worked over the frozen body, carving out the meat in long strips and bringing it to the fire which he kept before the mouth of the cave during that stretch of fine weather, to dry and cure it with heat and with smoke.

It was hard provision, when the labor was ended. This was no crisp-smoked venison, but a food as hard as wood, with a fearfully rank taste. However, there was a quantity of it. More than he could use, surely, through the course of the winter, eked out with what fish he could catch in the streams, and what mountain grouse he could find.

But the labor itself was a chief delight. It gave him so much to do that from dawn until the dark he was busy, and at night he slept soundly, exhausted. In the meantime there was enough of the big body and the bones left to supply the two wolves amply during a pinched season for them. They did not hunt that week, so gorged were they with food! And that experience fixed in the minds of mother wolf and the cub that the man was an invincible god, surely; for only a god, of course, could face and destroy with a blow the king of the mountains!

When the store of bear's meat was dried, he began to regulate his life carefully. His strength was not yet his by a great deal. The wounded thigh was healing fast, now, to be sure, but he had to guard against every sudden move, for fear lest the torn flesh should be set gaping again as had happened so often before.

He apportioned his hours. Some time he spent in making an opening through the smaller rocks that covered the top of the cave—a labor of infinite exertion and the greatest care, for he must not make too large an aperture, and yet he wanted one great enough to permit the smoke from his fire to rise through it and so to escape.

A part of each day for a long time went to the creation of this vitally necessary chimney. For the big fires which he would need in the bitterest heart of the winter would stifle him, otherwise, with the smoke.

The chimney was one labor, and the making of a bearskin all-over garment was another. To fashion and sew that ponderous suit, and to make from fragments of the skin stout bear-hide moccasins, and thick leggings that wrapped him to the hips was a thing that tasked all of his ingenuity. And when the work was done, the weight of the hide was almost unbearably great. And the smell of it was far from a perfume. However, it was warm, unbelievably warm. Equipped in it, like an armored knight among barbarians, he could defy the cold no matter how sharp the wind blew.

But even these two tasks were not all. He had to forage for wood. And that was a great labor indeed! He had no ax. All he could do was to hunt for branches small enough to drag back to the cave and store away in its depths, and break down dead shrubs. But he was never able, in this manner, to accumulate enough wood to give him any feeling of considerable safety. He could not use that wood for anything other than cooking, he found at last.

As for mere warmth of his body, for that he had to trust to the bearskin and, at night, the body of Silver King stretched upon one side of him, and the mother wolf curled on the other.

Neither were these preparations all that he had before him. Every day he went out to tend his little traps and dead falls, and take in the decreasing amount of small game that they furnished to him. Until, at the last, rabbits were almost all that he could expect to find, and these came sparingly indeed to his traps! He could fish, however, to the last.

And it was the fish that eventually saved his life. For, as the heart of the winter came, he found that the entire stock of his bear's meat was spoiled by the damp. The wolves had it to feast upon, and even they took it reluctantly. But, no matter how great the cold grew, and it became of an arctic intensity, he could break through the ice where the streams were frosted over with a thick armor, and drop his baited hooks of bone into the depths where still some life remained. And he made himself a long lancelike pole of light, dried wood, with a prong of bone. Then, like an Eskimo, he speared his fish through the openings which he broke in the upper ice above the streams.

In the meantime, the heavy winter set in. And it was unbelievably severe. Even in the lowest and most sheltered valleys, that season, the cattle died by the thousand, but up there among the battlements of the mountains, where the wind was king, bellowing and thundering day and night, to leave the mouth of the cave was to enter upon a dreadful battle.

Weeks and endless weeks followed. He dared not leave the cave except when the need of fuel and of food drove him out. And he would have gone mad from sluggish idleness and the lack of

food for his thoughts, had it not been for the Silver King.

Never an animal had such a schooling as the education which Glanvil lavished upon the cub; not even the most prized circus performers had such attention poured upon them. For the trick animal of the circus is, after all, only the meal ticket of its trainer, but the silver wolf was food for the very soul of Glanvil. When he spoke, there was no answer except from the active eyes and the pricking ears of the big brute. For it had grown big by this time. It sallied out with its mother, from time to time; and sometimes it went out to hunt by itself. But the vast majority of its time was spent in the chilly shelter of that cave with the man.

It came to understand him by gestures. It became a serviceable slave—with this difference, that its services were a happy game to the silver wolf.

If he beckoned toward the back of the cave, big Silver learned to go into the shadows and come back dragging a branch. Mother wolf could never be taught. But the big cub learned lightning fast with an open and a supple brain. He learned to go abroad, too, and drag home at the command of the master branches which would have exhausted Glanvil's strength to manage. And the Silver King, like a hunting dog, would stalk and strike down a rabbit and then bring it back to Glanvil. Once he came home trailing, with infinite effort, the quarter of a sheep. How far from the deep valleys beneath had it carried that prize? And what ranch was there to be preyed upon?

It brought a new thought to Glanvil. He had felt that no human habitation could be within many, many miles of his refuge on the mountainside; but now there was proof that he had been wrong.

He was in no haste to take advantage of the information, however. His leg was healed, now, but it was still stiff and withered. Every night he exposed it to the fire and rubbed it with grease to make the hardened flesh supple. Every day he exercised it carefully, and, little by little, he could put more confidence in it. Not until he was an active man again, however, dared he to venture among other men. For what his reception might be, he could not tell.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PATH OF THE SNOWSLIDE.

ALL was one in those wild mountains, that winter. December, January, February, and March stormed and raged and howled, and the snow was deep and the wind was filled with teeth of ice. In April, the weather began to change and break. And in April, Winsor Glanvil made his first descent upon the houses of men.

He was new-made, by this time. And when a bright morning came and the air was softer and the sun was brighter and nearer, he cast off the great cumbersome bearskin. There had been a day when the weight of that garment was a ponderous load to him. But now it was nothing. Those who live the life of the wilderness gain the strength of the wild things. His muscles were no bigger than they had been in the summer, perhaps, but they were supple as the body of a snake, and they were tough as a young hickory bush. There was not even a hint of a limp in his gait. The wound in his leg was long since healed, and the flesh had grown straight and the suppleness had returned to his muscles.

So he stood up strong and tall and cast away the bear robe. In its place he put on the deerskin trousers and jacket which were his latest manufacture. He had killed that deer himself, in hand-to-hand conflict, when he found the poor creature struggling in a deep drift of snow into which it had slid on the bosom of a little avalanche. And because of the battle, he prized that skin

as a symbol of his new manhood. Now, in these lighter, tighter garments, he stood at the mouth of his cave and looked forth on the day. There was sound everywhere. Among the loftier mountain heads, winter was still strong and thick with a helmet of ice, but here the strong April sun was beginning to work its way. There was a whispering of running water beneath the snow crusts. There was a furtive whistle from a bird from time to time. Insects hummed and darted like lightning across the air. And even in the woods there was a difference—not an actual stir of life, but the near approach of awakening, like the face of a sleeper just before the dawn. Spring was already there. Another few weeks and it would quite fling aside the white garments of the dreary winter.

Glanvil, from the height, read all of these signs, and felt a stir of happiness in his heart. He combed with his fingers the long black beard which had grown about his face in the last months, and like a king he looked slowly around him.

Far off, from the hollow, he heard the wail of a wolf; the Silver King squatted on his haunches and lifted his big head to the sky.

"Be quiet," said the man.

And the huge yearling wolf stood up again and watched his face.

"We are going on a journey," said Glanvil. "Are you ready?"

Silver King canted his head upon one side and looked on with wistful eyes, as he always did when a new word came which was not in his extensive vocabulary.

"We are going down," said the man, "to see what we can see. We have been here long enough, freezing and starving."

The young wolf, tormented by this flow of speech which he did not understand, looked anxiously around him. Yonder was a fallen dead branch. He leaped to it and came back carrying it in his mouth to the opening of the cave. But the master shook his head.

"Your mother will miss us," he said. "I know as well as you that she is coming back from her hunting, the old vagabond. Well, call her. Call her, Silver!"

The King dropped on his haunches readily, tilted his nose up, closed his eyes, and opened a mouth glittering with snowy fangs. Out from his quivering throat came the smooth, deep bay of a male wolf; the echo flew across the ravine and came faintly clanging back again; immediately after a short howl blew down the wind.

"She is running," said Glanvil. "She will be here at once."

He had barely time to go into the cave and come out again, bearing his rifle, when the timber wolf broke from the edge of the woods and slunk up beside him. He eyed her quietly.

"The old fool has missed her kill," said Glanvil. "Go bring her meat, Silver—meat!"

The King shot into the cave; he reappeared at once dragging the partially consumed quarter of a deer. This he dropped at the feet of the master, and Glanvil kicked it toward the she-wolf.

"Your belly is too thin for happiness," said he. "Eat!"

Her fangs were instantly in the meat. She ripped it off in long chunks and bolted them whole. It was amazing to see her melt her way down to the bone swifter than flame, but Glanvil stopped the process. If she were to accompany them, it would not do to have her belly too full. He laid hold on the end of the bone, a maneuver which she greeted with a snarl of rage; but he, chuckling, took her by the upper jaw and loosed her grip. She shrank away, skulking on her belly, raging inwardly, her eyes squinted as though in expectation of a blow. Truly he had gained a wonderful power over her in that winter, but

she was still far from the perfect understanding of his orders which the King had. The wild devil in her was pushed back behind a veil, and she paid him only that obedience which was forced from her by the dread of his superior strength of cunning.

"Take it back," said Glanvil, and the young wolf caught up the half-eaten fragment and darted with it into the cave. He came back licking his lips, and the man grinned down at him.

"You have stolen one bite, you scoundrel," said Glanvil. "Well, you will work for that before the day is over. Now, heel!"

He walked off down the mountainside, and they fell in behind him, the King at his heels, and the gray mother in the distance, unseen. He could never teach her to stay close. And, though she was never far away and always within the reach of his voice, she preferred to skulk from shrub to shrub and covert to covert, rather as though she were hunting them than as if she followed them at the man's command.

Halfway down the mountainside a red squirrel peeked above a stone, ducked down again, and then with the foolhardy recklessness of his race decided to take a chance and try to cross the clearing in front of these enemies and gain the nearest tree trunk.

At the first flash of the scurrying body: "Take it!" cried Glanvil.

The King dissolved into a black streak. Fast ran the squirrel, with tail streaming behind it, but faster rushed that impending doom. The red squirrel had reached the trunk of the tree before the King caught it. Then there was one snap of the resistless teeth and a headless little body dropped back on the ground. The King carried that body proudly to his master, and Glanvil laid it by under some brush and against the snow. He smiled as he went on, for the gray mother was sure to find that body and yearn for it, but she was equally sure to know the scent of his hand upon it and go on, leaving it untouched. Many a cruel lesson it had cost to teach her so much as this!

They crossed the first valley. They climbed the narrow ridge beyond and dropped into the farther hollow and here a whine from the King gave him warning. He turned and found the young wolf looking back up the slope over which they had come, quivering with terror. Then he saw the coming danger.

Perhaps their own footfalls had started the trouble by unbalancing a little stone that was the key to the situation and which, as it rolled, had loosened a tiny bit of snow, and this, sliding slowly forward, had disturbed the balance of a larger rock, and that rock, lumbering leisurely forward, had dislodged a still greater mass of snow. At any rate, just behind them a young snowslide was in full career, and now its rumbling voice grew about them. It was still high, high up the steep side of the mountain, but with every instant it was gathering speed, and with every instant its heavy front, plowing deeper in the piled and frozen masses of the snow, was gathering bulk, gathering breadth. It caught a little group of saplings, shore them off, tossed them upon its back, and went rushing on.

There was no time to stand and gaze longer; the King still waited for the word, but he was quivering with dread. His wisdom in this case would be great; but the wisdom of the mother would be greater still. Where was she? As for Glanvil, if he strove to flee, he was as apt as not to run straight into the path of the thundering menace. Ah, here was the she-wolf, leaping toward them out of a clump of trees.

She sped straight past them with a whine of warning and then ran ahead. It seemed the sheerest madness to Glanvil. It seemed that she was running in the very path when the avalanche would sweep in another moment. But he had

learned long before this to trust to her instinct rather than to his own reason in such emergencies as this. So he followed her at full speed, and that was a speed which would have amazed a sprinting athlete.

They darted straight down the mountainside and then up to the top of a little hill. Not a hill—hardly more than a little hummock of ground. Surely the old wolf did not think that this was a sufficient protection to keep the mass of snow from washing across them! Yes, here she paused and squatted on her haunches, her red tongue lolling out, her whole body quivering as she looked up on the approaching destruction. And the man, against his will, paused there also.

The snowslide was under full way, now. The thunder of its coming, heavily repeated from the echoing opposite wall of the valley, was a continuous roar. The King shrank against the side of the man and looked up to his all-knowing face. And he, feeling that his last hour had come, patted the noble head and set his teeth.

The slide had a great front, now, like the forehead of some enormous tidal wave, churned to the whitest foam. Nothing could stop it, it seemed. The veteran trees of the forest, feet thick in the trunk and stanchly rooted, were plucked up by the heel and sucked into the writhing masses; or else they were cut short at the ground and tossed aloft. And from the squirming back of the slide, now and again, the stripped trunks of trees were flung into the air as though the hands of giants hurled them, javelin-wise.

Straight on for the crouched trio that destruction raced, like a monstrous whale, huge headed, and tapering to the tail which, at the last, was a high boiling flag of snow dust fluttering in the air. The noise of the trees breaking was like the crackle of enormous machine guns, or the volleying of whole armaments of great twelve-inch rifles. Like a wall arose the white head of the mischief as it swept nearer—faster, now, than a racing blood horse—yes, faster than a thrown stone. No living thing could vie with that speed. And closer, closer, it cast its white brows above the tops of the dark evergreens near by.

There followed a shock that made the ground rock beneath the feet of the man. Then, with a wild roaring greater than a hundred hurricanes, the front of the snowslide staggered, reeled, and then pitched away to the side, casting a far-flying shower of snow dust across them.

Down and down it lurched, still gathering new speed. The whole front of that monster was by and the long, twisting, writhing, thundering body followed along a ravine which, heaped across with the crusted snow, Glanvil had not dreamed of as he ran across it. But the she-wolf had known and used it to save their lives.

Now the white ruin reached the pit of the valley. Now it flung itself far up along the opposite slope and there at last came to a stop, making a heap like a newly risen white mountain, stuck about on the face with the protruding hulks of tree trunks, like little matches which children stick into the cheeks of the snow man.

The path down which the snowslide had come was now a raw welt across the surface of the mountain. The trees were stripped away along its entire length, and in the end, digging deeper and deeper, it had stripped away all the earth down to the bed rock itself and left this wet and shining in the morning sun.

The she-wolf rose and shook herself as though issuing from cold water. But the cub edged closer to Glanvil and licked his hand with a faint whine. This miracle, in his eyes, must be owing to the consummate wisdom of the man.

There could be no explanation—how wise and great a master, how like a god he was.

And Glanvil, looking down at the beautiful head of the brute, and the eyes now abased and tender with submission and love, felt a little sharp-pricking pang of shame. He would have explained if he could. But all he could do was to vow silently to himself that that night the gray mother should feast till her insatiable maw was crammed.

Then they went on. Once more the she-wolf hung back behind them, skirting through the trees. It would need a wary foot, indeed, to surprise this hunting party from the rear!

"Go on!" called the master to the King.

Up the farther slope, which Glanvil himself had never topped, the silver wolf shot, but at the top he paused suddenly and flattened himself on the ground. Glanvil hurried after, and from the crest he found himself looking down on a little mountain village.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### IN THE TOWN.

HE brushed from his eyes the long mass of hair which, from time to time, he had roughly trimmed by hacking it away with his sharp hunting knife. It was marvelously altered from the shining black of the summer before when he won the heart of Louise Carney, for now it was a deep gray. So much the long agony of that fall and that winter had worked upon him!

Surely not even his oldest friend in the world could have known him now. But, for that matter, what friend had he worth noting? None at all. There was the wolf cub at his heels; and no human had ever meant so much to him as did the King. He thought of that with a touch of wonder, running his hand through the rich fur of the young wolf. And, in the meantime, his eye feasted on the village. It was very small, very poverty-stricken in appearance, but from the chimneys the smoke curled up and a faint chiming of voices came hollowly up to him—the piercing voices of children playing in the snow. It seemed very wonderful indeed that this small town had managed to exist through all the rigors of the winter. But there it stood. No doubt the greatest period of the snows had buried the houses to their eaves. Now they had been shoveled away, and the village appeared. A little more, and the snow would be melting under the warm suns of May.

All the pangs of his long torment came back to him now. The forgotten pangs of back and shoulder and deeply gashed thigh worked through his quivering flesh again; and here, so very near, there had been abundant help if he could have reached it. Surely if he had built a signal fire at night he would have had abundant rescuers about him by the next morning. But he was fiercely glad that he had fought out his own battle in his own way, single-handed. Now the world which, he felt, had so savagely wronged him, could not make a counterclaim against him. He felt between himself and all the universe, not a single binding obligation—except, perhaps, to the mother wolf. Yet there arose in him a strange hunger to see human faces again. And, since he knew that they could never recognize in him the destroyer of Jack Rutledge, he started straight down to the town.

The silver cub began to draw back. Not that he had ever had actual experience of man other than his master, but because, in his hunting through the woods with the gray mother, there had been one overpowering scent which never failed to make her shrink against the ground with bristling hair and with green hate in her eyes. That was the scent of man and of steel which lay, often, thickly about on the surface of

the snow. And, straight down into the deadly peril of that scent, which reeked up in the smoke from the houses, the master was going.

The King began to whine, but a sharp word from the master reminded him that his own poor wits were not needed; and he slunk along at the heels of Glanvil. There was another and a bolder interference now, however. Gray mother shot out suddenly from the woods in front of them and faced them with teeth snarled bare, and with green-lighted eyes of rage. She advanced on them with little stiff-legged bounds, as though ready to rush at their throats.

She too, apparently, wished to warn the master back. Until she was at the very edge of the village she persisted, but then the sudden voice of a child, playing near by, made her bound into the shadow with a silent baring of her teeth. She was gone without a sound.

A big, square-muzzled hound, half Great Dane and half bloodhound, from the look of it, came hastily through the brush, apparently drawn by something its nose had caught high in the air—for it came with head up until it saw the man and the young wolf skulking behind him. At that, bristling and savage, it would have rushed the King, but Glanvil interfered with a sharp word.

The human voice made the big brute pause and shrink with ears suddenly lowered; but then the very scent of the man seemed to change. No doubt, to those cunning nostrils of the dog, Glanvil was rank with the scent which of all is most loathsome to the canine race—the scent of the wild dogs, the tameless wolves! He came snarling to the very feet of the man, until the waved rifle of Glanvil made him shrink away again.

The Silver King, in the meantime, stood perfectly erect, head high, tail aloft, and the upper lip grinned back a little to show a glint of the ready fangs. He was a very statue for beauty, a very statue for pride and for flawless courage. He was not anxious to begin the battle with that burly monster which far outweighed his own undeveloped strength, but he would not give back an inch, and if the master spoke but a single word of encouragement, the fight would begin. All of this the master saw, and appreciated it with all of his heart.

But he warned the dog back again, he spoke to the King, and went slowly forward. He suspected what would happen, and he was not wrong. Balked of the immediate prey which was before him, by the presence of the man—that irresistible authority—the great fighting dog followed up another trail of interest and rushed off through the brush. There was only a moment of that noisy trailing, then sudden snarls of two varieties—the guttural, savage growl of the dog which says: "Let me get you by the throat, you brute! Let me close with you! Let me put my teeth into you in one good grip and hold and hold with my jaws locked, no matter what happens—or until men come! Stand still, you rascal, you renegade, you traitor! Stand still and fight! G-r-r! How I hate you!"

The snarl of the wolf, pitched higher, blood-curdling in its effect: "Man-tamed rat! Sneaking fool! Now I have you single-handed at last! Now your brothers and sisters are not standing by to help you! Now I have you weeded out from your cousins and your uncles and your aunts, I'll teach you a thing or two about fighting that you never dreamed of, you bloodless cur—you eater of table scraps—you herd hunter—you, you, *dog!* Ah-r-r-rah! How I despise you. Now catch me if you can while I knife you to ribbons!"

The fight began. It was a crashing whirl in the underbrush. And Glanvil did not stir. He had a supreme confidence in the result of that fight. And he only hoped that the hound would be destroyed utterly.

The snarling of the wolf was intermingled, now, with the short howls of agony and rage from the hound. Only a moment more—then the brindled brute burst out into the clearing, open-mouthed, yelping at every stride, and kiting along with all his might.

On his flank slid a smooth gray shadow, her head jerking sidewise as the long fangs ripped and slashed. She had written a pretty story on that burly beast already, and she was still busy writing. His shoulders were gashed, his neck was torn, he was streaked and flowing with crimson. To the edge of the brush she followed in silent savagery. Then the hound rushed on, howling, to find safety, and gray mother plunged to one side into the shadowy brush and was gone silently, as she had gone before.

"Good girl!" said the man. "You are the jewel of my eye, old wisdom. That was a red lesson for him!"

Then he went on into the street of the little town, with Silver King licking his lips in memory of the delectable picture which he had just seen, and following close, close behind the heels of his master. For, upon either side, new wonders and new terrors darted out toward him, or shouted at him.

In the first place there was a cluster of children who had raised a ringing peal of terror and of wonder when they saw the great hound rush from the wood so thoroughly thrashed. For he was the fighting champion of that town, was the hound. He had beaten every dog that dared to challenge his supremacy. Even among the people there was an air of awe when they looked upon the brindled monster, and his owner was fond of telling how, on a day, that hound, single-handed, had conquered a timber wolf—a real gray lober! He had never added that it was only a cub wolf that had been beaten. But, after seeing the great dog so thoroughly beaten, there presently stepped out from the woods a wild man with a long rifle in his hand and a dog which looked like a wolf following at his heels. The conclusion was too obvious—this black wolfish creature, which was not even panting with exertion, must have done the fighting!

They yelled with their wonder. And their yells brought their parents first to windows and then to door and then running out onto the street. They saw the strangest picture which had met their eyes in many a year—a man, dressed in a ragged, homemade deerskin suit, with the hair turned out, and rude moccasins on his feet, his gray hair chopped away from his forehead and falling long and wild about his shoulders. At his feet slunk the Silver King looking, indeed, like a monstrous silver fox.

They were too astonished to come to the stranger with questions—all of them, that is to say, except the owner of the burly hound. He was a big man, who loved his savage dog because their natures were akin, and when he saw his dog cowering at his feet, covered with crimson, he thought of one thing only, caught up a revolver, and plunged into the street. There he saw the wild man, and halted only an instant in his wonder. For, if the man was wild, his gray head seemed to say that he was old, also, and therefore weak. So he came running to Glanvil.

"Stranger," he shouted, "have you been settin' your wolf-dogs on my hound? By the heavens, you'll pay for that!"

Glanvil reached into the little deerskin wallet at his belt, and in which he kept the money which, by good fortune, he had not lost in his flight after the shooting of Rutledge. He drew out a nickel and tossed it at the big man.

"Your dog is worth about that price, I suppose," said he. And he passed on.

As for the other, he had come close enough to notice, under the thatch of the gray hair, the bright brown eyes,

young and keen, and the young black beard. And something about the fierce steadiness of those eyes, like the fixed stare of a mountain lion, made him turn and step back while Glanvil went on.

As for Glanvil, it was one of the sweetest moments of his life. He was strong of hand, he well knew, from those labors in the long winter of the mountains, but for the strength of his spirit he could not vouch. Now he had ample testimony, for with a mere touch of his eyes he had chained up the strength of a fighting man. He went on, and at his heels the Silver King walked with a higher head and a more watchful eye. All of this was merely a proof, to him, of what he had already suspected—that his master, though shaped like other men, was different—just as the gray lobo is shaped like the prowling, sneaking coyote—but how different are their fighting hearts!

Under the barber's pole he turned in; he saw the fat barber, and that worthy was gaping at him with great round eyes. Glanvil sat down in the chair.

"I am not a wild man," said he, smiling at the pale face of the barber. "I want a shave and a hair cuit, and all the talk, sir, that you can spare while you work!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DISCONCERTING NEWS.

THE fear of the barber was short-lived, for he felt at once that a man who valued his talk was an extraordinarily sensible person. As for the wild clothes, they did not at all match with the polite talk. He sensed an adventure and poured forth, in the beginning, a babble of questioning. The answer of Winsor Glanvil was perfectly smooth and perfectly simple.

"I decided to try my hand at trapping," said he, "and so I did. But my clothes were burned by accident, I was snowed in so that I couldn't move far from my camp, and altogether I have had a rocky time of it. The worst of it was when a deer which I thought I had killed with my rifle, stared up and gashed me across the face with his horn."

And, with this, he ran his finger along the hard furrow which the scar had left across his face. As for the gray hair, he could forgive the fate which had bestowed upon him that change, but he was filled with a soul-consuming curiosity to see the effect of the scar on his face. The ladies might find gray hair quite a romantic attraction. But as for the scar—he shuddered when he thought of it. Sometimes, on a cold morning, he could feel it drawing all the flesh on that side of his face and tugging at the corner of his mouth. And still, he had seen even large scars which were not unattractive. And perhaps the smooth beauty which had been his before might be exchanged, now, for a wildly romantic air which would be more instantly fatal to the hearts of the weaker sex. In the meantime, as he sat in the chair, he vowed to himself that he would not look into the glass until his hair was trimmed and his beard was shaved.

The talk of the barber flowed on in an uninterrupted stream. When he heard that this man had not seen a newspaper for six months, his heart swelled with joy. Out of his brain poured a vast tide of information.

"But," said Glanvil, "I don't care about politics as much as I do about what has happened in these same mountains around us. I wonder if some of those storms——"

"It's been a wild winter," said the barber, "but—good heavens, that has the look of a wolf, that dog of yours!"

"I think there may be a touch of wolf blood in it," said Glanvil carelessly. "But you rarely see black wolves."

"I've heard tell of a silver wolf no further back than last fall. Jem Turner trapped a big one right back country,

yonder, a dog-gone whopper of a wolf. He swears that it weighed a hundred and twenty pounds."

"A hundred and twenty pounds?" asked Glanvil. "That's a good deal more than I thought they ever went. You see," he added, "I'm entirely an amateur at trapping."

The barber grinned. "I reckon maybe you are. What made you do it?"

"I was weak and sick," said Glanvil. "Bad lungs—and the doctors recommended the mountains. I took the mountains in my own way. How big do the timber wolves go?"

"The biggest that I ever clapped eyes on myself went just ninety-five pounds, but then they come biggern that, I know. Jud Harper, he caught one and weighed it right on Welling's scales. That ran up to a hundred and seven pounds, but it was a pretty fat wolf. A hundred and twenty pounds don't seem hardly nacheral for a wolf to weigh, but I got to say that Jem Turner is an honest man; why, he nailed that wolf only about ten miles from here. I seen the skin. Looked like a black bear rug!"

It was not hard to put two and two together, after all. This was the father, beyond a shadow of a doubt, of the silver cub which now followed Glanvil, and with such a Herculean father and such a giant of a mother, with such special care and feeding as it had had, it should be a monster of its kind. Already, hardly more than fourteen months old, it looked simply too big to be a wolf. It lay in the farthest and the darkest corner of the room and watched the process of the shaving of the master until the gleam of the razor at the throat of Glanvil was too much for it. It slipped out and stood bristling near by, its head turning a fraction back and forth as it marked every turn of the hand of the fat man. How marvelous that the master should submit to this near neighborhood of death without a struggle!

"Well," said the barber, "if you want to know what's been happening through the mountains, I dunno that there's much excitement. When was it that you went up into the hills?"

"Along in August."

"August? Lemme look back. Was that after the big forest fire up the range that cleaned out tthe Slocums?"

"Yes, it was after that."

"I guess that you was around after Glanvil shot Rutledge?"

Glanvil closed his eyes.

"I don't think that I've heard anything about that. What Rutledge do you mean?"

"*The* Rutledge! Jack Rutledge!"

"Not the man——"

"That's him—it was big Jack Rutledge himself. And you ain't heard no talk about the shooting and what come up to it?"

"Not a word!"

"Well, well, seems like everybody must of knowed about that. This here Glanvil——"

"I never heard of him."

"A lucky thing for a lot of folks if they'd never seen or heard tell of him! He was one of these smooth-talkin' Eastern gents, mighty good lookin', they say he was. I never seen so much as his picture, though. But folks says that he was fine enough lookin' to of—hey, mister, will you send that dog away? He makes me sort of a mite nervous, I'll tell a man, snooping around and sniffin' at my leg as though he was pickin' out a spot where he'd take his dinner from. He's got a good deal of bitin' power, I s'pose?"

A word from the master sent the big wolf to a corner of the room, and there he sank down again, but with his head stretched forth upon his paws and his legs well drawn under him, ready to launch himself at the throat of the stranger in case the master should seem in need.

"All I warn you of," said Glanvil,

controlling a smile, "is that if your razor draws so much as one dot of blood while you're shaving me, the dog yonder will have your throat torn ragged in a fraction of a second."

The barber groaned; but then he went on with both his work and his chatter.

"This here Glanvil was a real heart-breaker. Seems that that was the way he got along. Nothin' immoral, I suppose. But just get the women interested in him and then pick their pockets. That sort of a cur! He come up this way and the first thing right off that he spotted was Louise Carney, of course. You've heard about her?"

"Her father made something in mines?"

"How many millions I'd hate to guess, I tell you! This Glanvil, he comes along and makes a pretty big play for her, and dog-gone me if he don't get her! After all, she's a pretty simple girl and don't know much about these fortune hunters. She sees how good lookin' he is."

"This," said Glanvil, "doesn't sound particularly interesting. By the way you started, I thought that there might be a murder or some such story in it!"

"Hold yourself together, stranger," said the barber, with a sort of gloomy intensity of delight. "Just you hold yourself together and listen right hard and you'll hear all that you want to hear about trouble. Well, this Glanvil finally got things fixed, and the girl had said that she would marry him, but right about at the same time, old Jack Rutledge begun to smell trouble. Jack was in love with Louise Carney, of course. Everybody on the range knowed that he had been—and back in the days before her dad made so much money, too. He begun to pry back into the history of this here Glanvil, and he found out plenty—enough to of turned your stomach to of heard them."

"What happened, then?"

"He give warning to a pal of this Glanvil that he knowed about the two of them and that they'd better start along if they didn't want a lynching party after 'em. But Glanvil decided to make his play, anyway. He got ready to make his start that same night with the girl.

"Now, there is a blind girl named Kate Preston that lives up yonder with Louise Carney—a sort of a queer thing, they say that she is. Sort of able to look at the insides of things—and people! Nothing like her nowheres else in the mountains, I guess. This here Kate Preston, she sort of read the mind of Glanvil and the girl.

"She up and left the house and she walked right down the road to town, in the dark, and all by herself! Mind you that—right down a trail, and her not able to see. But she felt her way along and though she got some pretty bad falls, she got to the town and asked somebody to lead her to Jack Rutledge. They took her there, and she told Jack that she thought everything was about to start. Jack, he has everybody watched. They see Glanvil's pal leave town early, and ride away and they foller him over the hills to the minister's house, there. Then they see what's coming and send for Rutledge. They go on and grab Sawtelle—that was his name—and make him tell what he knows—use a blacksnake to make him talk!"

The barber laughed.

"After that, along comes this here smart gent Glanvil and falls right into the trap; they grab him and figger on givin' him a beatin' that will last him for a while. They lace him down good and then they go back into the house, leaving him in the barn.

"Now, son, here's where the queer part of that yarn begins. This here soft-lookin' Glanvil, while they're layin' the quirt onto him, doesn't make so much as a peep of sound. He takes it all till he faints. Then while the boys are in the house drinkin' coffee and thankin'

Heaven that they saved Louise Carney from such a skunk, but wonderin' at the nerve of him, the door is throwed open, and they see this here Glanvil standing in front of them naked to the waist and with a mighty bad-looking cut on his face. Looked like he'd fallen against a nail and ripped his face right wide open. He yells out to Rutledge and gives Jack a mighty free chance to pull his gun. And then he beats him and puts a bullet into him and turns and runs away."

"Very odd," said Glanvil through his teeth.

"That ain't more'n the start, friend. The boys thought that Rutledge was dead, and they open up with their gats on Glanvil. They chase him right on out of the town and they must of sunk one of their bullets in him, for by and by, the next morning, the hoss he'd swiped come back to them in the town. Glanvil must of rode until he dropped dead off'n the back of the hoss. About a week later, a cow-puncher come across a body that was in pretty bad shape and partly eat up by wolves or coyotes, or something. It was a gent about the size of Glanvil that had black hair like him —and in fact it must of been Glanvil's body!"

"Well," said Glanvil, "it seems as though he paid for that little party pretty well."

"Mighty queer, that part of it. Everybody put him down for a yaller skunk, but in the end he turned around and fought like a devil."

"And Rutledge—he was dead, I suppose?" said Glanvil.

"Dead? Him? Of course not!"

Black mist spun before the eyes of Glanvil. Had the long agony of that winter been for nothing, then? Had he accomplished nothing by that facing down of Rutledge?

"Of course not," said the barber. "The bullet hit him fair and square, but it glanced around off his ribs. He was up and walking in three weeks."

"It doesn't seem possible!" murmured Glanvil.

"Jack Rutledge ain't like other men. Besides, he had something to do, and that was to cheer up Louise Carney."

Hot fury stormed through Glanvil.

"I suppose that he managed to accomplish that?" he said faintly.

"Sure! I suppose that he put before her all of the facts that he knowed about Glanvil. Anyways, she grieved a lot at first and when the body was brung in she put a fine big stone over his grave in the churchyard and put his name on it. And she said on it that he'd died fighting like a man, which nobody could very well deny. But afterward, she forgive Rutledge and seen that he was acting by his best lights, I suppose. And now, what would you think has happened?"

"Where there's a woman concerned, one never can tell," said Glanvil.

"That's a true thing! Well, she up and got herself engaged to get married to Rutledge, and the thing is comin' off next week!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### GLANVIL CANS HIS SCHEME.

THE voice of the barber went on, but the man in his chair, though he nodded from time to time, heard nothing but the sound of it like a distant stream of wind through the trees in the mountains; for his mind was too filled with his own thoughts.

All the thing which had comforted him during the long agony of the winter was undone at a stroke. At least, he had been able to tell himself, he had paid a price, but he had brought down one enemy and a great one, to his death. Now it seemed that his blow had been struck in vain. And there wakened in the heart of Glanvil a deep and implacable rage which was never to die away, again, until many a grim thing had been done by his hand.

Then, at last, he heard the barber

say: "And there you are, sir! Ain't able to recognize yourself, I guess! Tell me if you like the job!"

And he thrust a big hand mirror before Glanvil's face.

What the latter saw was a nightmare, not himself. The black beard was gone; the gray hair was neatly trimmed. The aspect of an old man was gone and his youth was restored to him—but what youth it was!

Ten years had been added to his age; but the apparent passing of time was the least of what he saw. All the right side of his face, as he looked at it in profile, was as it had ever been—handsome and even beautiful beyond the right of men—save that the smooth grace was ended, and in its place there was a closer chiseling, a lean look of strength. But the left side? It was a ghastly grimace! A great white scar ran down over the flesh, twisting in beside the eye and then zigzagging down near the corner of the mouth and so to the chin. The nostril was drawn a little, the corner of the mouth was pulled into a faint smile which seemed the very incarnation of sardonic rage and hatred. Even the eye was drawn and narrowed, so that he seemed, from that side, to be peering out with a look of settled and penetrating malice.

In all the world, he had never seen a face more terribly repellent. The barber himself was biting his lip and standing back with a faint frown of pain, as though he himself felt the stroke which had left this scar.

"That deer," said he, "you had ought to of burned alive, partner!"

But Glanvil, rising hastily, paid the man double and hurried from the room as he would have hurried from a torture chamber. In the street there were a number of hangers-on and idlers, pausing here and there in little settled groups, and all gathered, beyond doubt, for the sake of seeing the wild man and his wild dog at closer range.

But every face changed color as he went by, and every eye widened in staring upon him. No, they could not even look steadily upon him, these mountain yokels, but turned their heads hastily away as though ashamed of the horror which they felt. And the marked man went by them with a raging devil in his soul.

He could revolve only one thing in his mind. What could be done to Jack Rutledge to make him pay for this desecration? The barber had named it —death by fire—slow fire—that was the thing. Or, better still, some mark upon the soul of the man which would never wear away!

Here was the end, then, in a single stroke, of all the power which had been poured into his hands by nature. God had so framed him that merely to look upon his face had been a delight, and now that delight was turned into horror and fear. Ay, and he would teach the world that he was truly to be feared!

First, however, he must be dressed as a man, not as a wild beast. He went into the general merchandise store. There he bought the best-fitting clothes that he could find. In a back room he donned them. After that, he bought a horse and saddle, mounted, and started directly on his way.

A pack of the village dogs, which had gathered at a respectful distance behind his heels, as soon as he spurred his horse to a gallop, broke into a clamor and swept around the Silver King. So he drew rein and, turning, looked back.

"Take them, boy!" he called.

And Silver King, obediently, joyously, "took" them.

First there was a whirling black shadow, like a spinning pool of night, in the midst of the pack of the dogs, and out of the central circle they leaped away with loud howls of pain. A dozen dogs, and many a proved fighter among them, they stood off and snarled and howled, but they had tasted of the steel

of the Silver King, and they were wary, now. One, bolder than the rest from a random strain of bulldog blood in it, leaped in at the young wolf. Glanvil saw his warrior meet the rush with a heavy-turned shoulder, saw the dog sprawl on its back—then one flash of the gleaming white sabers which the King wore, and the throat of the dog was ripped across.

He rolled in his death agony, kicking among the pack of his comrades, and they gave back again.

But Silver King had the taste of blood, now, and he flew at the circle in a fury. It did not last half a minute. But, when the circle of the village dogs dissolved, three of them were stretched lifeless on the snow, and the rest were kiting back for the houses as fast as their trained legs and backs would carry them, with the King in hot pursuit. Another and another went down in a cloud of snow dust and then lay still under the assaults of the tyrant—until the sharp whistle of the master called him off and drew him back.

But in all of this, Glanvil looked in with the utmost satisfaction. He, among men, must live as the Silver King would live among dogs—a slayer, a heartless destroyer. But, if he were to live safely, he must do his destroying without bringing upon his head the penalties of the law. That was obvious. No outright murders, but destruction carefully planned and carefully executed, so that the blame should seem to fall always upon the other man.

He conned that scheme quietly over and over while he rode on. He sent the King ahead, and the big wolf scoured away with a swift gallop over hill and dale, through bush and grove, coming back again, repeatedly, and standing on some little eminence in the trail to watch the oncoming of his master. He was the master hand, this Silver King. He was the matchless destroyer. From him Glanvil would learn.

So he came, at the last, to the little town in the hollow. How well he remembered how he and Louise Carney had looked down upon that place through the black of the storm! He rode on down the hill. He passed the minister's house opposite the church. Yonder was the minister himself, working in his little garden, but he did not so much as wave his hand at the rider who passed, with the big black dog running ahead.

Besides, how could he have guessed that the gray-headed rider was that man who had figured most prominently in what was the minister's strangest day in all of his life?

Glanvil paused, then dropped from the saddle and strolled idly into the churchyard. It was a quiet place. The naked shadows of the stripped trees lay in a mottling pattern across the graves. Here were new stones and old. Here were weather-worn head markings inscribed with rough mottoes. Some of them he read.

"Here lies Bill Granger. He beat Sam Waldron and Marty Kline and died game when the Indians came down."

"Here lies John Winter. He did his share. He was a square man and his word was better than a balance scales."

Then there were more formal and more neatly inscribed stones which told of later and of more prosperous years which had come for Sacketville. Glanvil wandered slowly among them. For somewhere, unless the barber had lied, was the tombstone which marked the psuedo-remains of himself!

He went on, therefore, pondering over each legend, until he came before a great, smooth, granite shaft, and on the shaft was written:

"Here lies the body of Winsor Terence Glanvil. He died as a man should die, fighting bravely. May God forgive his sins."

He read it over and over again.

"He died as a man should die, fight-

ing bravely. May God forgive his sins!"

Had she found this inscription in her own gentle mind and prepared it for the writing on the stone? And he thought again, how she had ridden with him through the storm, bravely and gayly, and laughing at the fury of the wind and the beating of the rain. And a sudden breath of her sweetness swept up to him like the breath of a spring wind over fields rich with new flowers. There was a new touch of sad gravity in Glanvil as he turned from the tomb of the unknown man who bore his name.

He was dead, so utterly dead that the woman who had loved him had built this monument to his name and now was preparing to marry another. At that, a red stroke of rage almost blinded him; and he found his way out to the horse, mounted and went swiftly on.

**To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.**

## A NEW GLACIER FOUND

M. MULKAY, a trapper in the Quinault River district of Washington, recently announced the discovery of a huge new glacier in the Olympic Mountains of Washington. This newly discovered ice field, said to be one of the largest in the Olympic Range, is located on Muncaster Mountain, which lies between the head waters of the Rustler and the east branch of the Quinault River. The new glacier was discovered by a fortunate accident.

District Ranger Fulton, F. Olson, Lloyd Cooper, and Mulkay were investigating the district in search of forest fires. In order to get a better view of the country the party decided to climb Muncaster Mountain, a peak with an elevation of approximately seven thousand feet. On reaching the top of the peak, the investigators found that the mountain was split in two parts, a fact never before known. Climbing down a precipitous slope, they reached a broad meadow between the halves of the peak.

This meadow was at least a mile in width and abounded with game. Following the meadow down between the cañon walls, the party came to a precipice at its end. Looking over this ledge they discovered an immense ice field, two hundred feet below them. The glacier is approximately a mile wide, and it can be reached only by the route taken by the party. During the rainy season the meadow is probably a lake. Because of the difficulties in reaching the mountain, the cleft in the peak was never discovered before, and the existence of the glacier was unsuspected.

# Lost Mines

by Roderick O'Hargan

OST mines! What a world of fascinating thought these two words bring up. Every great mining region in the five continents is alive with stories of them. How breathlessly the world of readers awaited the monthly installments of Rider Haggard's "King Solomon's Mines." How many expeditions have fitted out to trace the source of Solomon's wealth? Fifty? Probably a great many more—great expeditions, which takes no count of the hundreds of individual efforts. And how many lives have been sacrificed on that single quest?

Not quite forty years ago, a new chum, Sid Wheelwright, strolled into the "Green Man" public house at Coolgardie, Western Australia, and plumped onto the bar a natural nugget. It was not quite pure gold, but it had substance—it weighed nineteen and a half pounds.

Wheelwright must have had a sense of the dramatic, for the event caused a tornado of excitement and a royal debauch, in which the owner, Wheelwright, lost his life.

During his "luck celebration" Wheelwright told a dozen different stories of the place of its origin. For several years every possible clew was followed up, but "Wheelwright's pitch" was never discovered.

Nearly all lost mines are in regions either difficult of penetration or subject to topographical alteration, such as sandstorms and cloudbursts in deserts or earth disturbances in volcanic regions. Hence in our Western States the most mysterious and persistent legends center in what was known for so many years as the Great American Desert, touching or including the States of Colorado, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Nevertheless, other States have their legends—the Quartz Mountain Mine of Central Idaho; the War Bag, in what is now the Glacier National Park, on the Montana-Canada boundary; the Tin Bucket Mine in Oregon; Linguard's Lake Mine in northern California; Otto's Mine, in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and the amazing Son-Ora Mine that dropped out of sight in Texas, and, according to report, not far from old Fort Hancock.

How true are these stories? A few are true and reasonably accurate in detail; a larger percentage have some foundation in fact, and others, simply the result of man's natural love of the mysterious—stories told countless times and altered and added to in the telling. War, famine, and flood have had their

part in the discovery of mines—and also in the hiding of mines. Who doubts the existence of Mexican mines lost to sight in the shuffle of revolutions? And who remembers that the Cœur d'Alene district, with its recent "more-than-a-million-a-month production," was, after being worked by the Hudson's Bay traders at the end of the seventeenth century, lost for nearly fifty years or more?

Who wants a lost mine? There is the Breyfogle, somewhere near Ash Meadows in Death Valley, Inyo County, California, and there is Gunsight, in the Funeral Range, in the same district. Cross the Valley to the Panamint Range, climb up to Panamint City, which was literally a "howling" success in the seventies and now has a population of none. Working from that point you might find the "Lost Spectacles" Mine. It's yours, if you find it, for the owner has passed on to where he needs neither spectacles nor mines. If you want a "warm one," try for Doc Thorne's Mine in eastern Arizona. "Help yourself" applies to this one, too.

## RADIUM FOUND IN COLORADO

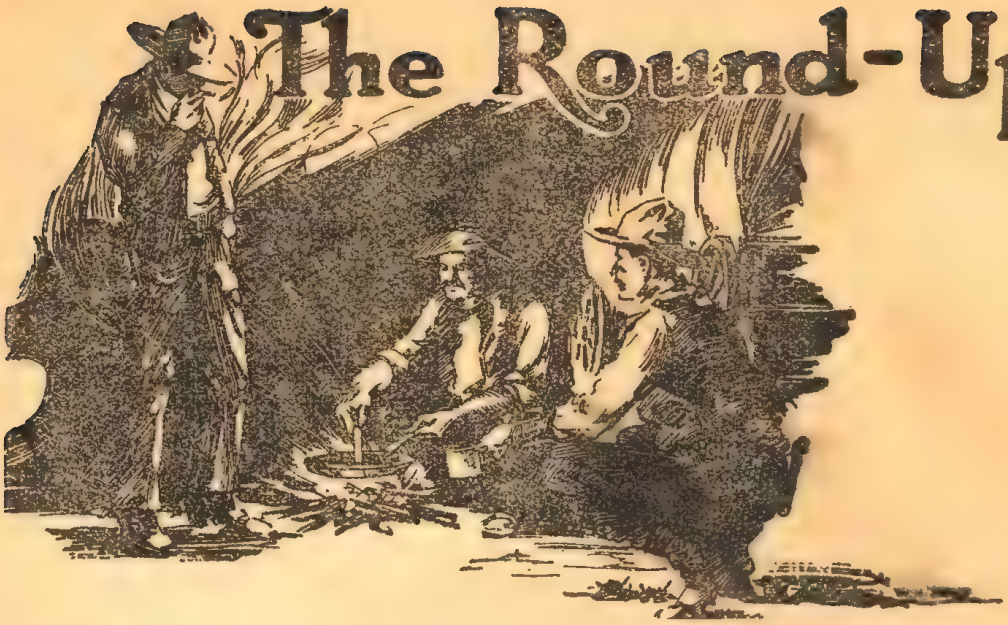
A SHORT time ago a copper and silver mine, belonging to Oliver Frantz and Storm Brothers, which penetrates Storm Peak, about twenty miles west of Loveland, Colorado, was closed, pending the arrival of government geologists. It is believed that radium has been found here.

The strange manner in which the presence of the mineral is said to have been unearthed has added interest to the alleged discovery. The kerosene lamp in Frantz's cabin burned out during the night, while the miner was inspecting pieces of ore resurrected during the day's work. He stood up to search for a match. As he did so, a bit of the dust and ore in his hand fell on a hot stove. There was a swishing sound, and the cabin was lighted, as though he had turned on an electric switch.

Frantz is himself a geologist, and he caught the significance of the flash. When morning came he took some companions and went to investigate the tunnel of the mine. For days the miners had been drilling through pitchblend, carnotite, and other ores in which radium is found. But the miners had not even suspected the presence of radium in this mine. They had drilled about forty feet, taking out about a foot a day. It will require a number of weeks more to reach the real ore body of the mine.

Mining men contend that the presence of radium would account for the violent electrical storms in the vicinity of Storm Peak, which have given the territory its name.

# The Round-Up



RIGHT off, the very first thing, we want to wish all of you here present this evenin' and all of you who couldn't get here, the very, very happiest of Happy New Years that any of you have ever known.

Now, these good wishes of ours, well meant, as all of you know them to be, may seem a bit premature, as it were, but by the time we all get to meetin' again in this here place next week, it will be 1925. Another year will have rolled by, and a new one will be on its way.

So, once again, we wish you all, each and every one, Happy New Year!

We won't go to makin' any rash promises, that not bein' our way, but we will go as far as to say, that the way things are linin' up, it sure looks as if WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE would be a far more interestin' publication durin' 1925 than it has been in any other year.

Before gettin' down to readin' letters from some absent ones, we want to thank all of you for the wonderful interest you have shown in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, for the support you have given the publication, and for the loyal way you have stuck by it and brought new friends each week to the Round-up. May the tribe increase!

Bein' as this is our New Year's Eve Round-up, we're going to start off with a little shootin'. Here is a long one from James I. Martin, Kansas:

"DEAR BOSS AND BROTHERS OF THE W. S. M.: I must say a few words in answer to F. R. Buckley's letter in your October 18th issue. I don't think his ideas of firearms are reasonable, and I believe that he has given them without any experience or study of arms and ammunition in a practical way. I feel sure that I am older in years than he is. I am sixty-seven. There was a time long ago that I, too, was a cannon man, using a ten-gauge shotgun; my next gun was a twelve-gauge, then a sixteen, and now I use a twenty. If I ever buy another, it will be a twenty-eight gauge. I have as good luck in long shots and kills as I ever did with the ten-gauge, and as to rifles shooting two and three-ounce ball, and the gun weighing eight to ten pounds, he must have his gun mounted on a carriage. Years ago I used a rifle that would have done for an elephant. To-day I would not think of using a larger caliber than a .30-30, and would prefer a Savage .22 high power. For a hand gun I use a Rusing automatic .22, using Poag rifle cartridges, and this will

kill rabbits as far as I can hold a sight on them, and that is as well as I could do with a gun weighing ten pounds, and how much more agreeable to carry.

"Now a word about the killing power or big bullets and little bullets. To try and make this plain, I will give some of my own experience. I will take the shotgun and relate experience in the shooting of Mallard ducks and pheasants. I was out duck shooting, and they were not plenty, and extra wild. I could only get single shots and long ones. I used No. 6 shot in the day. I got six Mallards, three clean kills, two that fluttered down, and one cripple that I had to chase. I have always made a careful examination of my kills in dressing game to keep tab on the pattern my gun was making. In this case the three clean kills one was only hit with one pellet in the head; another was hit with nine pellets, but only one touching a real vital part. The third was hit with only one pellet, and that was in the neck. The fourth was hit with twelve shots. The fifth was hit with six pellets. The sixth, the cripple that I had to chase, was hit with fifteen pellets, one wing broken. This shows that one pellet regularly placed was better than fifteen. This proves that it is not the large bullet that does the work, but the one rightly placed. The .30-30 is a killer in the hands of the marksman. The biggest gun made would be useless in the hands of one who was not.

"Brother Buckley thinks applicants for hunter's licenses should pass an examination as to their ability to handle weapons safely. I am with him, only will add that they should be able to do accurate shooting, should know all about the different kinds of powder, the power of the different caliber cartridges, and when all these points are filled, the small cartridges and light gun will do the work. I never shoot until I have aim on the object. I would rather the game would get away than shoot without having aim on a vital part. I hardly ever have a cripple get away to die, and I have been as successful with the pea shooter as I ever was with the cannon, and enjoyed the hunt far more, as a day's tramp did not tire me out, as was the case when I toted that eight or ten-pound powder burner.

"I will bring this letter to a close with a few remarks to Brother Scott Ellett. He confesses to being a gun nut and of handling many guns. I can't see why he chooses the kind of gun that he calls his pets. The Colt is a good gun when equipped with a barrel of length to compete with the caliber of the .44 special. His gun should have a barrel at least eighteen inches to utilize all the gas. Perhaps sixteen inches would do in the case of a cylinder gun, as there is quite a loss of powder gas between the cylinder and barrel. I have owned Colts from the cap and ball up to the latest. Their automatics are O. K. I want only those with visible hammers. I have no use for a hand gun with a barrel less than six inches. I now have a pair of Rusing automatics .22 caliber, with .22 long rifle cartridges. They will penetrate six and seven inches of pine at twenty-five feet, and will kill any game we have here up to one hundred yards, and it takes careful aim to cover a rabbit at this distance. In thinking over my deer-shooting experience, I can with truth say that for every deer killed over fifty yards there were twenty killed under fifty yards. I have had a number of chances to shoot deer at less than twenty-five feet. A .22 caliber short cartridge would have killed them if aimed correctly. Let's close until some other gun crank gives us an opening."

Now for a word of praise for an author from J. R. Hanlon, who is vice principal of the Hayward, California, Union High School.

"DEAR EDITOR: I desire to congratulate you upon this story in your

WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE of October 1st, 'Lonesome Lays a Ghost,' by Robert Ormond Case. I have never read anything to surpass this for wit and genuine humor; at the same time it is full of philosophy and psychology. Here is something you cannot beat of its kind: They make you want to believe them, and after that, there's nothing to it. Give us a lot of Case, won't you?"

W. H. Bradford, San Antonio, Texas, *he* ups and says something that will make all the authors happy. Hark ye!

"DEAR BOSS AND ALL HANDS: Take notice of this little say. I have been a reader of the old stand-by, WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, for some time, and here lately there is a debate in which you folks want to say who is the best writer. Now let us all get together and have a showdown. You know and I know and we all know that to make a magazine great is to pull together. Let us all vote and say, *all of them* are 100 per cent. It will make the boys feel better, and it will make them try harder. They are all good and you folks know it.

"As for myself, they are all good. Say, boss, where is Nicholas Silver? And Range Rider? Get those fellows to work. Well, I had my say. Who in the camp will agree with me? Good-by."


***IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:***

# THE BLACK RIDER

**By MAX BRAND**

Here you'll find a charming hero, incognito.

# LUCK AND A PICK HANDLE

**By HUGH F. GRINSTEAD**

Sometimes it literally takes a "hard knock" to get common sense into a young head that has been turned in the wrong direction.

# The Guard Invisible

**By FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE**

Not even his millions could protect him from the sin of his avarice.

**AND OTHER STORIES Order Your Copy in Advance**

**John H. Bolle, 976 Hainey Street, Seattle, Washington, says: "I have just received my badge and it surely is a dandy."**

**Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to the Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., N. Y., will bring you either a button for the coat lapel, or a pin. In ordering be sure to state which you want.**

**Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.**

SOON the bells will be ringing in the glad New Year, brothers and sisters. May its coming bring to each of you new fields of interest, new friends, greater happiness and prosperity than ever before. This is the sincere wish of Helen Rivers.

From Rubye Dodge, Wichita Falls, Texas, comes this New Year message: "It has been just a year since I discovered the Hollow Tree and I have been a better contented girl ever since. Folks, if you want a new interest in life for 1925 just join The Gang. Once you get the spirit there's nothing like it."

Here is a letter full of wistful appeal. Among our wide circle there is surely one who knows just the place for this sister.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I have just found your Hollow Tree, and I would be so grateful if you would try to find me some correspondents of my own sex and age. I think only those who have had similar experiences can really respond to, understand, and sympathize with each other.

I am fifty years old. I used to feel much younger than my age, and I had many friends among young girls in the study circles, college courses, and dramatic-musical organizations I belonged to in New York City. They loved me and sought me constantly; they said I made a link between their generation and their mothers'.

But since my mother died last spring and my favorite sister followed her six weeks afterward of a six-day illness, all youth has gone from me. I came up here to Maine to the little cottage my mother left me. I had never seen it before, although she had been here fifteen times.

I have a son twenty-five years old, for whom I kept house before, but now he travels and is away most of the time.

You can't imagine how lonely I am. I can't blend with the summer people, who are naturally gay and a bit self-centered. I can't adjust myself yet to the psychology of the Maine natives, the Islanders, as they are called, who live here all the year round. I am sure there must be some fine characters among them but I am too sore and weak now to try to prevail against their morose terseness of manner and speech. My mother was so warm and quick.

I had not a very happy childhood home, nor a happy married life. Now my son is away and my two best friends have died. I have had very poor success with my writing. Some have praised my work, mostly poetry and one-act plays, but I have sold very little. I think the trouble with me has been

that I haven't been in my natural environment.

But I know that I could fit in if I could only find where I belong. There must be somewhere which is natural to me. Cactuses can't grow in the arctic. Humans have natural soul habitats. I know where mine is. The trouble is I haven't strength and energy left to go alone where I feel I belong. I have enough to live on, but my nerve is gone.

Will you find me some lonely woman way up North, in one of the Hudson's Bay posts maybe, or such a place, who would write to me, and after much correspondence perhaps I could summon nerve enough to go up to board with her or live on equal sharing of expenses. To go up there alone without a person to call my friend is beyond me now. Yet I long for the real wilderness, the true North. MRS. F. F.

Care of The Tree.

All about Louisville, Kentucky, folks.

DEAR GANG: Louisville is the largest city in Kentucky, with a population of approximately three hundred and sixty thousand. It is situated on the Mason and Dixon line, and is just one night's ride to Chicago, Cleveland, and St. Louis, and twenty-six hours to the original speed town, New York.

The loveliness of its environment—river, vale, and upland—the charm of its historical associations, the hospitality of its inhabitants, give a distinctive lure to Louisville, and its central location makes it especially attractive as a city of beauty, fashion, and wealth. Stately old homes, built largely by the descendants of the cavaliers of Virginia, delight the eye with their beauty, and vie in comfort with its many modern residential specimens of architectural art. Its shaded streets, its miles of park drives, its suburban environment, the beautiful Ohio flowing past its doors, its churches, schools, libraries, and museums make it a city that is hard to beat.

Louisville has the oldest municipal university in America, the greatest Baptist college in America, a night law school and school of pharmacy, manual-training high school, girls' high schools, and negro high schools.

This city is in the heart of the wonderful truck-garden section in which is grown the very best of all that is good to eat, both in the way of vegetables and fruits. Consequently it is not dependent upon any other market for supplies of this kind. Its rich and fertile valleys, its vast coal fields, its oil fields, its picturesque mountains, its natural wonders plus its man-made wonders have made it a Mecca for tourists. Its climate, normal winters and summers, and protection from tornadoes and severe storms plus its world-famous thoroughbreds make it a leader among cities of its size.

GEORGE J. FREEMAN.

Care of Arthur Emmettsberger, 1046 Charles Street, Louisville, Ky.

"If any of The Gang would like to hear about the Pendleton Round-up just write me and I'll tell you all about it," writes Orlo McLain, Box 674, Pendleton, Oregon.

Fred Lounsberry, Latouche, Alaska, promises information about that country to those who ask for it. He says it takes about six weeks for a letter to reach there and a reply to be received.

"Any sister living in any country who loves the mysterious, the romantic and the unusual, please write me," asks Sylvia May Brickell, P. O. Box 678, Grants Pass, Oregon.

A Scotch lassie, Helen Hall, would like some American correspondents between twenty and twenty-five years of age. Her address is Care of Bookstall, L. M. S. Station, Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland.

A. L. Hamilton, 3455 West 64th Place, Chicago, Illinois, wants three brothers of The Tree who are good hikers and game, to get in touch with him. He plans to start about April first on a hike from Chicago to New York, from there to San Francisco and back to Chicago, making a definite number of miles a day, say forty. Anybody interested?

"I am on a lookout station and my duty is to spot fires and report them. Both my groceries and water have to be packed up to me by packhorse. It is a lonesome job and I wish some of The Gang would write to me. I will be glad to give any information I can give about the national forests." This message comes from W. E. Spaid, care of Forest Service, Orient, Washington, brothers.

A real Western ranch girl, Francisca B., who is convalescing from a long ill-

ness, will welcome letters from Hollow Tree sisters, and will tell them all about ranch life. Write her in care of The Tree, girls.

Susie Nation, Carta Valley, Texas, is another Western girl who'd like a full mail box.

A call for letters comes from Arminta Stoner, 4636 Douglas Street, Omaha, Nebraska. This sister says she has punched cows, ridden broncs and learned to handle a gun. She'll be glad to tell those interested about North Dakota and Nebraska.

G., care of The Tree, wants some pen friends about twenty-three years old in New York City, as he expects to locate there soon.

"See if you can drown me out with letters. I promise none of them will go unanswered. I'm twenty-two, married, an oil worker and live in Orange County, California. I am a native son." This challenge is from Earl G. Stanbro, La Habra, California, brothers.

A sailor brother, King Neptune, is mighty anxious for some letters. Address the letters in my care.

"I may be a recruit but I'm going to crowd in with the old-timers and hear the latest," says the sister whose letter follows.

DEAR GANG: I'm twenty and married, and have a boy eight months old. We are buying a home away from the heart of town down between some hills and the great Los Angeles River, which is about fifteen feet in width and usually a foot or two in depth. I have heard that in the East some folks think shipping is done on it but about the only sailing is by boys with toy boats. There is, though, a swift current underground, and by digging six inches you can find water.

The hills on the other side are a part of our prettiest park, Elysian Park, Trees and flowers are cultivated all over them, and at the entrance is the greenest lawn to be found. I have been told that an old volcano is hidden somewhere among the hills. My husband says that one time he ran across a stream of water swelling out of the ground as hot as fire.

Down in among the hills is a small valley which looks for all the world like a mining town. Digging back into the earth—mule-drawn cars—rigging just like a mine—but it is merely a brick foundry.

I'd love to hear from other States, even from the northern part of this one.

MRS. HELEN MILLICAN.

2358 Cabot Street, Los Angeles, Calif.

## MINING GRASS FOR GOLD

ALONG Trinity River, in the northern part of California, from Junction City to Hoopa Reservation, moss mining for gold is followed to a considerable extent. This season the water has been unusually low, and more people took to the strange kind of mining. Strictly speaking, it is grass mining. Grass grows down to the water's edge in many places along the river. When high water comes, fine gold is washed down the river and is caught by the tufts of grass which may be likened to a sponge. Miners pull up this grass and wash it in a gold pan. They get nothing but the fine gold.

This year grass mining has not paid very good wages, though two miners from Sacramento were lucky enough to wash out one hundred dollars in gold in half an hour. On an average, those who engage in grass mining earn less than two dollars a day. Tourists and hunters camped along the river do much of this type of mining because of the novelty of it.

# Where To Go and How To Get There

By *John North*

**It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.**

**Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.**

## HOVENWEEP—DESERTED VALLEY

OF the several reservations known as national monuments, some which I have described are noteworthy as having important historic associations in the making of the West; others have been set aside for the American people because they are unique specimens of nature's handiwork; still others are of great scientific interest, and then there are the reservations that contain relics of a civilization and a people belonging to a prehistoric era.

To this last classification belongs the Hovenweep National Monument, which comprises four groups of remarkable towers, pueblos, and cliff dwellings of great antiquity. Two of the groups are in Hackberry and Keely Cañons in Colorado, while the Ruin and Cajon Cañon groups are across the Utah State line.

Historians to this day do not agree as to the cliff dwellers. That they were a people similar to the Pueblo Indians, who still live on their reservations in New Mexico and Arizona, seems pretty well established. They were a vanished race at the time the Spaniards came, and the theory is that they took to these retreats in the cliffs to escape from the raids and depredations of powerful hostile tribes. Although this is conjecture, it is the most probable explanation of the cliff dwellings, for men do not take to living on ledges in the walls of remote cañons unless there is an urgent danger driving them.

Hovenweep is an Indian word meaning "deserted valley," and it well describes this region of ruins. To me the thought of this ancient people who were harassed by their foes and finally exterminated is one of the most impressive phases of the story of our wonderful West. Somehow it fascinates and enthralls the imagination because of the vagueness and mystery enshrouding the actual details of this lost race of men. We have only the ruins of their homes to tell us the tragic story.

This national monument then will have a special appeal to those who, like myself, take pleasure in speculation as

to the details of the story of the people who occupied these dwellings.

There are, as I have said, four groups, situated in four different cañons, Hackberry, Keely, Ruin, and Cajon Cañons. There are eleven buildings in the Ruin Cañon group. The largest of these is known as Hovenweep Castle, the walls of which are sixty-six feet long and twenty feet high. The "castle" has several towers and large rooms, and also two kivas or men's ceremonial rooms at the east end. The towers are rectangular, circular, semicircular, D-shaped, and oval. They are usually two or three stories in height. Some have single rooms, while others have multiple chambers. These towers with multiple chambers are a distinctive feature of the cliff dwellings of Hovenweep; they do not occur in other ruins that have been brought to light, and they are altogether different from anything in the more modern pueblo architecture. Here, again, there has been speculation as to what purpose they served. They do not seem to have been habitations, but rather, it is believed, that they were granaries, or forts, or else had a special religious use. In many instances, they are too shut in by the surrounding cliffs to have been of use as watch towers, so that one man's guess on the subject is as good as another's.

Every one who visits the West should make it a point to devote some of the time to a side trip to view the relics of these ancient Americans, for they are as much a part of the romance of the West as those places which recall the pioneers, cattle kings, Indian fighters, and covered-wagon emigrants who came centuries later.

Hovenweep National Monument lies about fifty miles west of Mesa Verde National Park. Each of the four groups of ruins is situated within a mile of the main-traveled road between Dolores, Colorado, on the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, and Bluff, Utah. The ruins are accessible by auto, and a visit to them can be made as a side trip when at the Mesa Verde National Park.

### ANOTHER BOOST FOR FLATHEAD

Dear Mr. North: I read the letter that H. W. Reed wrote to you about the Flathead Valley in Montana. Being a resident of Kalispell for several years myself, I am prepared to corroborate his statements.

As to capital, I cannot say exactly what would be required, though a relative of mine bought a creditable piece of ground—fifteen acres—and built a substantial and comfortable house for three thousand dollars. This land has no fruit trees, but it produces three crops of alfalfa a year. A good-sized creek runs through the center of it, and could easily be dammed and used for irrigation purposes. This land was already cleared and fenced. Stump land can be bought for from forty to sixty dollars an acre.

As to the work required at the saw mills, very little experience is required for most jobs, although such as machine sawyer and edgerman require considerable skill.

The climate there is truly wonderful. The winters are mild, with considerable rain mixed in. Then there is fishing and hunting a-plenty. Flathead Lake contains salmon trout and almost every kind of fish that any one would desire. The streams are abundant with rainbow, speckled, and mountain trout, as well as silver salmon and others. In my opinion, western Montana, and especially the Flathead Valley, offer the most to the prospective settler in the West. Harry J. Davis.

San Francisco, Calif.

Many thanks, pard, for the friendly tip, which I pass on to those interested.

### WANDERERS, ATTENTION!

Dear Mr. North: Do you know of any one who would like to go on a camping trip and live the life of a rambling cowboy? I was born and raised in the State of Arizona, and have ridden the range all over Colorado, New Mexico, and all the trails clear to the heart of old Mexico. I can take a man anywhere he wants to go, or if you know of any one who wants to find out about anything in Mexico in a quiet way, I am ready to go at a moment's notice alone. I want to spend my remaining years out where I belong, where a fellow has a chance to get a good breath of *air!*

J. C. A.

Any one interested in this offer may address the writer in my care.

# MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

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**SILVERNAIL, ELGIE L.**—He was working for a man by the name of Curtis Kellogg, in Watertown, South Dakota. His mother and sisters are anxious for his return. Mrs. Frank Grimm, 612 East Main Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**CAREY, MICHAEL.**—He was killed in Casper, Wyoming, about six years ago. Please communicate with Larry Carey, 2021 Center Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**WEALTHY.**—Why did you leave Illinois in July, 1923? I have everything you lost along the Mississippi. Does H. or your mother know yet? Tell me what your real name is. Write to my old address in Wyoming. The R. 9 Cow Boy.

**ADAMS, ERNEST** and **KNEALIOUS.**—Their mother's maiden name was Ida Tucker. They lived in Woodstock, Vermont, with their uncle, Herbert Tucker, who was working as a blacksmith. Their mother is growing old and wishes to see them before she dies. Any one knowing their present whereabouts will kindly notify Wade Adams, 1220 South First Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

**MACLAGAN, ALEXANDER.**—He is sixty-one years of age, and left Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1876. He went to Montreal and then to Toronto, Canada, and was last heard of in St. Paul, Minnesota. Please write to his brother, Thomas Maclagan, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle, England.

**BOER, CLARA.**—I want to hear from you once more before I leave New York City. Please write to the same address. Paul.

**WATERHOUSE, ROBERT.**—He served in the Spanish-American War, and was discharged in 1900. Please notify Mary Cunningham, 1773 Hancock West, Detroit, Michigan.

**BURNSIDE, JOHN IRLAND.**—He lived at 1102 Victoria Street, San Antonio, Texas, some time ago, but is now supposed to be in Oklahoma. Please send all news to C. Urlrick, 911 Maple Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

**RILEY, WILLIAM T.**—He formerly came from Clendenin, Virginia. A friend is very eager to get in touch with him and will appreciate his present address. William R. Shannon, General Delivery, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania.

**EIBERGER, FRANK H.**—He was in Goldfield, Nevada, in October, 1910. He was a cook and was forty-seven years of age. Please write to Mrs. S. Samlar, Humboldt, Arizona.

**WATT, FRED G.**—Please write to me for the sake of the days we had last summer. K. W. B., Santa Maria, California.

**WESTERLINDER** or **WESTERLIND.**—Information is wanted concerning the descendants of the original family bearing this name, formerly of Falskoping, Sweden.

**ADAMS, JOHN H.**—He was last heard of in West Tulsa, Oklahoma, in August, 1920. He is five feet ten inches in height, has a fair complexion, blue eyes, and dark hair. His sister is very anxious to get in touch with him, and will welcome any helpful information. Mrs. H. G. McGouirk, Canal Point, Florida.

**WEGER, WALTER.**—He was last heard of in Brooklyn, New York. Any information will be appreciated by H. L. H., care of this magazine.

**ROYSTON, DOCTOR EDWARD GEORGE.**—He was formerly connected with the British Chemical Company, in Trenton, Ontario, Canada. Please write to Genevie, of Los Angeles, California, who still loves you, and has been searching for you since 1918. Address in care of this magazine.

**THOMPSON, MYRON.**—He is twenty years of age, and was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, some time ago. Notify L. Thompson, care of U. S. S. "Hyacinth," 424 Federal Building, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**HAMILTON, F.**—He was last seen in Indiana. Please send all information to L. Thompson, care of U. S. S. "Hyacinth," 424 Federal Building, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**GOOD, Mr.**—He and his wife adopted the infant daughter of George Green, in 1875, in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. She is now forty-nine years of age. Her uncle is very anxious to get in touch with her, and will appreciate any helpful news. C. M. Grifton, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

**OPPELT, EDWARD A.**—He is a marine engineer, connected with the United States Shipping Board, and went to San Francisco, California, in January, 1924. Any information regarding his present address will be appreciated by Jack, care of this magazine.

**M. B.**—Write to Bill Hamilton in care of the Pickering Lumbering Company, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, about Manuel. Your son.

**HEALY, WROCKER, RIKER.**—I would like to find my mother, Grace Healy, whose maiden name was Grace Wrocker or Riker, who was born in Trenton, New Jersey. She married Martin Healy, who died in August, 1906, in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I am also anxious to find Nora, Patrick, and Bridget Healy. Please send all helpful information to Mrs. Sarah Sterr, 515 West One Hundredth and Twenty-fourth Street, New York City.

**MANNING, ELLIS.**—He was last heard of in Troy, New York. Write to Albert R. Brayton, 323 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York City.

**LA VEAU, ORVILLE.**—He is supposed to be living in Detroit, Michigan. A friend is eager to see him, and will appreciate any news concerning him. Albert R. Brayton, 323 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York City.

**LANZA, EDWARD.**—He was in Brooklyn, New York, some time ago. Please send his present address to Albert R. Brayton, 323 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York City.

**JOUGONIS, PETER.**—He lived at 53 South First Street, Brooklyn, New York. Kindly notify Albert R. Brayton, 323 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York City.

**BROTHERS, ANNIE.**—She came from Manchester, England, in 1905, with her uncle, Alfred Brothers, and was living in Lawrence, Massachusetts. She has two sisters, Polly, Nellie, and three brothers, Henry, Alfred, and Willie. Please communicate with an old friend, Margaret Jones, who is now married. Mrs. F. Wrigley, 7 Harding Avenue, Lakewood, Rhode Island.

**NEEL, Mrs. ALTHA.**—She was a cook for a road camp in Athens, Texas, in 1918. Write to your friend, Shorty, who is eager to see you. A. C. Sullivan, Box 342, Eufaula, Oklahoma.

**PAUGLEY, ZOLA S.**—She was last heard of in Athens, Texas. Send your present address to Shorty, Box 342, Eufaula, Oklahoma.

**POTAC, FRANK.**—Please write to your mother, who is worried and wishes you to return home. Mrs. Mary Potac, 722 Seventh Street, New Kensington, Pennsylvania.

**BUTLER.**—I would like to get in touch with my father, John F. Butler, who worked in the sulphur mines near Lake Charles, Louisiana, and is now supposed to be in the oil business near Wichita Falls, Texas. I would also like to hear from my brothers, William, who was in the navy, and Edward, who lives in New Orleans, Louisiana. Please send all helpful news to Earnest Butler, 625 Broad Street, Lake Charles, Louisiana.

**ALLEN, THELMA.**—I would like to get in touch with my relatives. I was born on November 17, 1903, and was placed in the Willard Parker Hospital, New York City. My mother's name is Amanda, and my father's is unknown to me. Any one having any information kindly notify me, in care of Mabel Parker, Fourth Street, Box 266, Highlands, New Jersey.

**JAMIESON, EDDIE.**—Come back or write at once. Rose, 1439 East Twenty-seventh Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

**MacPHERSON, JOHN.**—He was last heard of in Susanville, California, where he worked with the Fruit Growers Company, and was planning to go to Los Angeles, California. Write to Evelyn A. Boardman, 37 Orchard Street, Malden, Massachusetts.

**ARNOLD, CHARLES F.**—He was a machinist for the Sixteenth Ordnance Company, in Camp Knox, Kentucky. He is six feet in height, and weighs one hundred and seventy pounds. An old friend is very eager to get in touch with him, and will appreciate any news concerning him. Aubrey Alvis, Thirty-fourth Ordnance Company, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

**TARBOX, Mrs. JOHN.**—She lived near Oswego, New York. Her nephew would like to hear from her. Guy Hill, 311 South Washington Street, Bloomington, Indiana.

**HILL, CHARLES.**—He formerly lived in Charleston, New York. Please send your present address to Guy Hill, 311 South Washington Street, Bloomington, Indiana.

**WHEAT.**—My mother died when I was five years of age. I would like to know if her father and sister, Maggie, are alive. Her father was a baker in Kansas City, Missouri, about eighteen years ago. My mother's name was either Frankie or Winnie. Any information will be gladly received by Gladys, care of this magazine.

**BAYES.**—Before she married C. C. Bayes her name was Viola Hobbs, and lived in Charleston, Washington. Please notify Gladys, care of this magazine.

**DE CHAUX, NICK.**—He left his home about eight years ago, and was last heard of in Reno, Nevada. Please write to your folks, who are in great need of you. A friend, H. M. L.

**HOYT, JESSE J.**—He was in the Juvenile Asylum, Dobbs Ferry, New York, in 1922. Later he left for Brace Farm, Kensico, New York. Please write to an old friend, E. Chandler, care of this magazine.

**DIAMOND, DICKIE.**—Please get in touch with your family at once. Bert is dying with brain fever, and Helen is broken-hearted. George and Rawley.

**PETERSON, CHARLES,** of Tacoma, Washington. Harry is married again, and I would like to get in touch with my brother, Clarence. I am well, and am living out West. Please write to me as soon as you see this. Henry Bobenhousen, 1014 Bryant Street, San Francisco, California.

**McBRIDE, ELMER.**—Please write to your sister and your aged mother, who are worried over your absence. Your father died in Marshalltown, Iowa, on June 9, 1923. Your sister, who formerly lived in New Rockford, North Dakota, is now at 501 Ninth Avenue, Sacramento, California. Mrs. N. L. Treffry.

**PURVIS, ROBERT H.**—He is about fifty years of age, has a scar on his nose, and was last heard of in Richmond, Virginia, and Chicago, Illinois. A friend is very eager to hear from him, and will appreciate any helpful news. J. J. Woitesch, care of this magazine.

**FASSELL, STANLEY C.**—He served in the army in the Twentieth Infantry Company at Fort Douglas, Utah, and was last heard of in Salt Lake City, Utah. Please write to your son, who is living with his aunt, Velma. Roderich S. Fassell, care of Mrs. A. B. Stowe, corner of Fourth and J Street, Price, Utah.

**ATTENTION.**—I would like to hear from Foley, Pipestem, Dempsey, Kennedy, and Duval, who were on the U. S. S. "Pittsburgh" with me. Dick Hyland, 1532 Polymnia Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

**BILLIE.**—Please write to me or your mother, as we would like to know if you are well. Rosie.

**GOLDSMITH, WILLIAM A.**—He was a baker and was last heard of in Lafayette, Indiana. Please notify his brother, Virgil E. Goldsmith, U. S. S. "Procyon," care of the Postmaster, San Francisco, California.

**COONTZ, JOHN C.**—Your daughter is anxious and would like to get in touch with you. Loraine Coontz, R. 8, Box 392, Dallas, Texas.

**JACK.**—Why don't you write and let me know if you are well and happy? The suspense is dreadful. Please let me know why you left Piedmont, and don't be afraid to tell the truth, as there are no hard feelings being harbored toward you. Nelly.

**DENT, WILLIAM.**—He left his home at Marked Tree, Arkansas, on May 12, 1924. He is a lumber inspector by trade, and was last heard of at Hoxie, Arkansas, on his way to hunt work. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his father and mother. H. H. Dent, Marked Tree, Arkansas.

**JONES, WILLIAM.**—Please write, as I am very anxious to hear from you. I have written you three times, but have received no reply. Send mail to the same address. Mary Walker.

**IMHOFF, JOHN F.**—He is thirty-nine years of age, left home about twenty years ago, and had his left arm amputated when he was three and a half years of age. Please send all information to Mrs. Vera Rudolph, 25 Hanover Street, Lynn, Texas.

**McCONNELL, FELIX G.**—He is five feet six inches in height, fifty-five years of age, has black hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. He left his farm near Fayette, Alabama, in March, 1921, and it is believed that he is in the West. Any news would be greatly appreciated by his niece. Mrs. Mercer Matthews, Mercer, Alabama.

**FOSTER, STEPHEN.**—I am ill with anxiety. I love you and hold no hard feelings toward you. Please write and do not break the promise you made me. Grace, care of this magazine.

**INEZ.**—Please get in touch with me at once, as I am worried. Jimmie.

**COURTNEY, GEORGE CROFF.**—He is thirty-eight years of age, and it is believed that he lived in either North or South Carolina about twelve years ago. His sons are very eager to find him, and will appreciate any helpful news. G. E. Courtney, U. S. S. "Hartford," Navy Yard, Charleston, South Carolina.

**FRAD, WILLIAM SHERMAN.**—He was placed in the children's home at Ironton, Ohio, when he was a small boy. He is now about forty-five years of age, and was last heard of in Texas. His sister is heartbroken, and will be grateful for his present whereabouts. Mrs. Jacob Moore, Oak Hill, Ohio.

**SHANKS, ERNEST.**—He is a Baptist minister, and formerly lived in Akron, New York, and Toronto, Canada. In 1912, he went to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was planning to go to Indiana. An old friend would like to hear from him, and would appreciate any helpful information. B. S. E., care of this magazine.

**BRESTO, DAISY.**—She was living at 10822 Fairchild Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, and in 1920 she was stopping with Mrs. R. Jackson, at the Lawrence Hotel, Jamestown, New York. Her present address is desired by her sister. Mrs. Lela Kelley, Route 1, Box 35, Webb, Arizona.

**WATSON, ARTHUR C.**—He left his wife and daughter on September 9, 1923. He is a short, thick-set man, with gray hair, and is slightly marked with smallpox. Any information in regard to his whereabouts will be appreciated by E. Y. Watson, 1910 Diamond Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**WILL W.**—Send your address to Theodore as soon as you see this.

**BUCK, GRANT U.**—He was in Sheridan, Oregon, in 1916. The boy who stayed with you would like to hear from you. Conrad Weidenkeller, Wendling, Oregon.

**WINNIE.**—If you see this please write at once, as I am very much worried and would like to know how you are getting along. Geepie, Box 1242, Shreveport, Louisiana.

**TWINING, ROLAND F.**—If you wish to hear from your mother please communicate with L. D. P., care of this magazine.

**YOUNG, Mrs. MAUDE.**—She deserted her children and her husband, and left with a party by the name of Coulden. Her maiden name was Maude V. Ott. Her mother is dead, and she is requested to write to her brother, George E. Ott, Halltown, West Virginia.

**PETERSON, ALBERT OSCAR.**—He is twenty years of age, five feet five inches in height, has blond hair, blue eyes, has an anchor tattooed on his right arm, and a design of two hearts with two hands, clasped, on his left arm. He left the U. S. S. "Gulfmaid" in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 2, 1923. Please write to your friend who is very eager to hear from you. John Crinos, 30 Fresno Street, Roslindale, Massachusetts.

**RUSSELL, JOHN AMBROSE.**—He left his home in Chicago, Illinois, in the spring of 1912, and was planning to visit his brother in Wyoming. He is twenty-six years of age, has red hair, blue eyes, one of which is defective. His sister would like to get in touch with him, and would appreciate his present address. Mrs. M. G. McIver, Cantil, Kern County, California.

**DAVIS, ANNIE,** and **McDONOUGH, DANIEL.**—They left England about 1906 for Cleveland, Ohio. Please send all news to C. McDonough, 23 Grosvenor Street, Broughton, Salford, Manchester, England.

**STONE, JOSEPH FRANKLIN.**—He was discharged from the United States army in 1921, and was last heard of in Charleston, South Carolina. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly notify Bernice W. Flowers, R. F. D. 5, Lumberton, North Carolina.

**HOLCOMB, CLAUDE M.**—He served in the United States army in 1920. Please write to an old friend, who is eager to see you. A. R. Riggle, R. 6, Box 199, Vancouver, Washington.

**ROBB, JOHN S.**—He left Kingston, New York, two years ago, and was supposed to have worked in Detroit, Michigan. His mother's health is poor, and she wishes him to return home or write. Mrs. Mary A. Robb, Wilbur Avenue, Kingston, New York.

**BALDRY, EDITH E.**—She was last heard of in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1905. Please send all information to Edward E. Garner, 1109 Twelfth Avenue, East, Oakland, California.

**LUCKENSMEIER, WILLIAM.**—He served in France with the Thirty-sixth Division, One Hundred and Eleventh Engineers, Company D, and was last seen in France in 1918. An old friend would like his present address. C. E. Reed, 502 East Pleasant Street, Belvidere, Illinois.

**WOJEIK, Mrs. CATHERINE.**—She was born in Albany, New York, and has been missing since September 12, 1923. She is twenty-eight years of age, four feet ten inches in height, has a light complexion, and weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds. She is nervous and subject to attacks. Any news concerning her will be greatly welcome. John Wojeik, General Delivery, Chicago, Illinois.

**HOPPER, JOHN.**—He is forty-eight years of age, and left his sister's home in Paterson, New Jersey. His niece would appreciate his present whereabouts. Mrs. Bessie Scott, Box 341, Hopewell, Virginia.

**SMITH, MARGARET.**—She was born in September, 1883, in Glasgow, Scotland. She was in New York City for a few years, and when last heard of she was leaving for New Orleans, Louisiana, or San Francisco, California. She was at one time employed by the Morris Department Stores, in Newark, New Jersey, and left there in August, 1920, after the firm was burned. Her sister is very eager to find her and would welcome helpful news. Mrs. Jeanie Taylor, Herbert Street Rosalie, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

**HALEY, JOHN.**—He left Shumway, Illinois, in 1890, and was last heard of in Billings, Montana, in 1901. His sister would appreciate his present whereabouts. Mrs. Mary E. Chase, 4707 McKinley Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**LINDSAY, GEORGIE.**—I would like to get in touch with my parents or relatives. I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1888, and I was put in charge of a woman, who later placed me in the Children's Home in Minnesota. Please send all information to Georgie Lindsay, care of this magazine.

**WILSEN or NELSON, CONSTANCE.**—She was living at 955 Roscoe Street, Chicago, Illinois, in 1915. Any one knowing her present whereabouts will kindly notify Mrs. John O. Hatleli, R. 1, Box 5, Cloverton, Minnesota.

**STENSON, JAMES.**—He was married to Minnie McKay about twenty years ago, and was later divorced. He went by the name of "Jim," and was last heard of in Oklahoma. His daughter is most anxious to see her father, and will appreciate his present address. Marie Carr, General Delivery, Depew, Oklahoma.

**McGREW, FRANK.**—He left Knoxville, Illinois, and was last heard of in California in 1901. His mother is dead, and his sisters, May, Elizabeth, Minnie, would be glad to hear from him. Please send all information to Mrs. Herbert Smith, Box 42, Porter, Indiana.

**NELSON, LAWRENCE.**—Please insert your address in this column, as your sister is very eager to get in touch with you. Sister Helen.

**ROQUEMORE, SAUL P.**—He was in Miami, Florida, in 1923. Please write to Jack Terheun, Box 12, U. S. S. "Colorado," care of the Postmaster, San Francisco, California.

**THOMPSON or KING, LAURA.**—She was last seen on the highway between Toronto and Hamilton about two years ago. She lived with a girl named Helen in the northern part of Toronto, Canada. Later she moved to 165 Jarvis Street, and also worked as a waitress in a hotel in the same street. Her friend, whom she met at the Prince George in 1919-1920, is anxious to hear from her. Mac, care of this magazine.

**WILLIAMS, GEORGE.**—He lives somewhere on East Thirty-first Street with his aunt in Kansas City, Missouri. He is twenty-three years of age, five feet six inches in height, has dark hair and eyes. A friend is very eager to find him, and will welcome any helpful information. Jack Shaw, 522 North Fourth Street, St. Joseph, Missouri.

**SLATER, FRANK or W. F.**—He was working as an engineer in a saw mill at either Grey's or Grace Harbor, near Seattle, Washington. His aged father is very ill, and in case of death he must be found before the estate can be settled. Please notify Mrs. Maude Benson, 521 South Elena Avenue, Redondo Beach, California.

**DUTCH, G.**—I received the letter and package and everything is O. K. Mrs. B. M. G.

**STOFFER, Mrs. OLIVER and NANCY.**—They were last seen in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and were supposed to have left for Los Angeles, California, in 1912. A friend would like to get in touch with them, and will welcome any news. J. F. Lane, 141 Sibley Street, Detroit, Michigan.

**YATES, J. W.**—He was known in parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and around Hunter, Arkansas. Send information to V. R., care of this magazine.

**RUTHERFORD, R. E.**—You must have misunderstood my telegram. Write me where you left me. Mae.

**ANDERSON, RICHARD.**—He is five feet ten inches in height, has dark hair, blue eyes, and was working as an electrical engineer in the coal mines in Virginia. Any news concerning him will be appreciated by Mrs. D. Kelton, 25 West Third Street, Newport, Kentucky.

**ADDLEY, JAMES.**—He is now seventy-five years of age, and lived in Ontario, Canada. I would like to hear from him or his wife, whose maiden name was Lizzie Montgomery. Please write to Mrs. F. C. Betham, R. 1, New Haven, Michigan.

**BELL, H. H.**—For the sake of one who is dead please write to her father before it is too late. H. Inglert, Fontanet, Indiana.

**PATTY, THOMAS.**—He lived with his father in South Bend, Indiana. His cousin desires his present address, as she has important news for him. Murrel Patty Redick, Box 53, Carmel, Indiana.

**BRADY, JACK.**—He has blue eyes, brown hair, is short and heavy built, and served in the army during the war. He married Hazel Cope, in San Francisco, California, and has one son by the name of Don. He left his home in 1919, and has not been seen since. His sister-in-law would like to hear from him. Mrs. W. C. White, Cleveland, Oklahoma.

**SPICKARD, RAYMOND.**—He has been missing since May 13, 1924. He is five feet eight inches in height, eighteen years of age, has dark hair, brown eyes, and weighs one hundred and fifty-five pounds. When last seen he wore a gray suit, light-gray felt hat, a dark-brown overcoat, and black shoes. The boy's mother is broken-hearted over his absence, and anything done toward his recovery will be highly appreciated. Mrs. Jesse Spickard, care of Mrs. C. Brooker, 8440 Custer Avenue, Hyde Park, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**MACKENROTH, EDWARD.**—He was a seaman on a vessel that took trips to South America. He also went to New Orleans, Louisiana, but was last heard of in Cuba. Any one knowing his present whereabouts kindly notify B. B., care of this magazine.

**DODD, C. M. V.**, formerly from Delhi, New York. He is eighteen years of age. He is requested to write, as there is important news for him. E. E. Dunbar, 301 Interstate Building, Kansas City, Missouri.

**REA, JOHN T.**—He invented a vacuum well-drilling machine in Seattle, Washington, during 1910 to 1912. Any information leading to his present whereabouts will be gladly received by W. A. M., care of this magazine.

**FOLEY, JAMES WESLEY.**—He is twenty-four years of age, and was placed in a home for destitute children about 1904. His home was in Waltham, Massachusetts, and he was adopted by a family by the name of McKinley. His brother and sister are anxious to hear from him. Jack Foley, 13 Summer Street, Watertown, Massachusetts.

**JOHNSON, ROBERT LEE.**—He has been missing from home since 1911, and was last heard of in South Dakota. He is thirty-four years of age, five feet six inches in height, has brown hair and eyes. His mother would like to find him, and will appreciate any helpful news. Mrs. Ethel Johnson, St. James, Missouri.

**STROMSTED, HANS.**—He was born in Sweden and came to the United States in 1910. In 1918 he was working for the Chicago & Milwaukee Railroad as a bridge carpenter at Beverly, Washington. He is forty-three years of age, five feet eleven inches in height, has dark auburn hair, and wears glasses. Any one knowing his present address will kindly write to J. E. Harlin, 917 Forest Street, Bellingham, Washington.

**SHERIDAN, HUGH.**—A friend is very eager to get in touch with you. Please write as soon as you see this. William MacDonald, care of William Duff, 45 Rushbrook Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

**MARKLAND, GEORGE A.**—He is also known as George Asher. He is eighteen years of age, five feet six inches in height, has brown hair, and was known in Baltimore, Maryland, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is a printer by trade. Any knowledge of his present whereabouts will be appreciated by George M. Griffin, 133 Gifford Street, Syracuse, New York.

**SAYRE, PETE or UDELL.**—He is fifty-five years of age, was an experienced farmer and gardener, had worked as a clerk in stores, and had deficient eyesight. He was last seen in Grand Island, Nebraska, about four years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his nephew, C. P. Alexander, 102 East Market Street, Akron, Ohio.

**PATTY, R. W.**—Please let me hear from you at once. Mrs. Della Copeland, 55 Houston Street, Atlanta, Georgia.

**BARNEY, C.**—Please come home at once, as mother is ill. Dorothy.

**DAVIS, ALBERT.**—He left home on December 10, 1923. He is fifteen years of age, has blond hair and blue eyes. His grandmother would like to get in touch with him. Mrs. W. E. Treadwell, Oklahoma.

**O'MARA, DANIEL CHARLES.**—He is twenty-four years of age, has brown hair and eyes. He left his home in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1918 to join the navy. He will receive information to his advantage by communicating with his brother. Any one having any news will kindly write to Tom J. O'Mara, 629 Madison Street, Topeka, Kansas.

**MELVIN, GEORGE.**—He was last heard of in Washington, District of Columbia. Any news of his whereabouts would be gratefully received. R. L. Bloss, Box 71, Brookston, Pennsylvania.

**DUTCH, G.**—Please write to your sister at once. Mrs. Marie Schon, 7637 Vernon Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

**WHITNEY, JACK.**—Please wire me at once, and you will hear something to your advantage. Harry.

**HOLDER, JETTER L.**—He is six feet in height, has light curly hair, hazel-blue eyes, and weighs two hundred pounds. He is supposed to be somewhere in El Paso, Texas. His sister would like to hear from him and would appreciate his present address. Mrs. L. A. Duncan, 2 Belmont Avenue, Charlotte, North Carolina.

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1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7¾ inches
1 Vegetable Dish, 10½ inches, with lid (2 pieces)
1 Deep Bowl, 8¾ in.
1 Oval Baker, 9 in.
1 Small Deep Bowl, 5 inches
1 Sauce Boat, 7¼ in.
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1 Sugar Bowl with cover (2 pieces)

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